

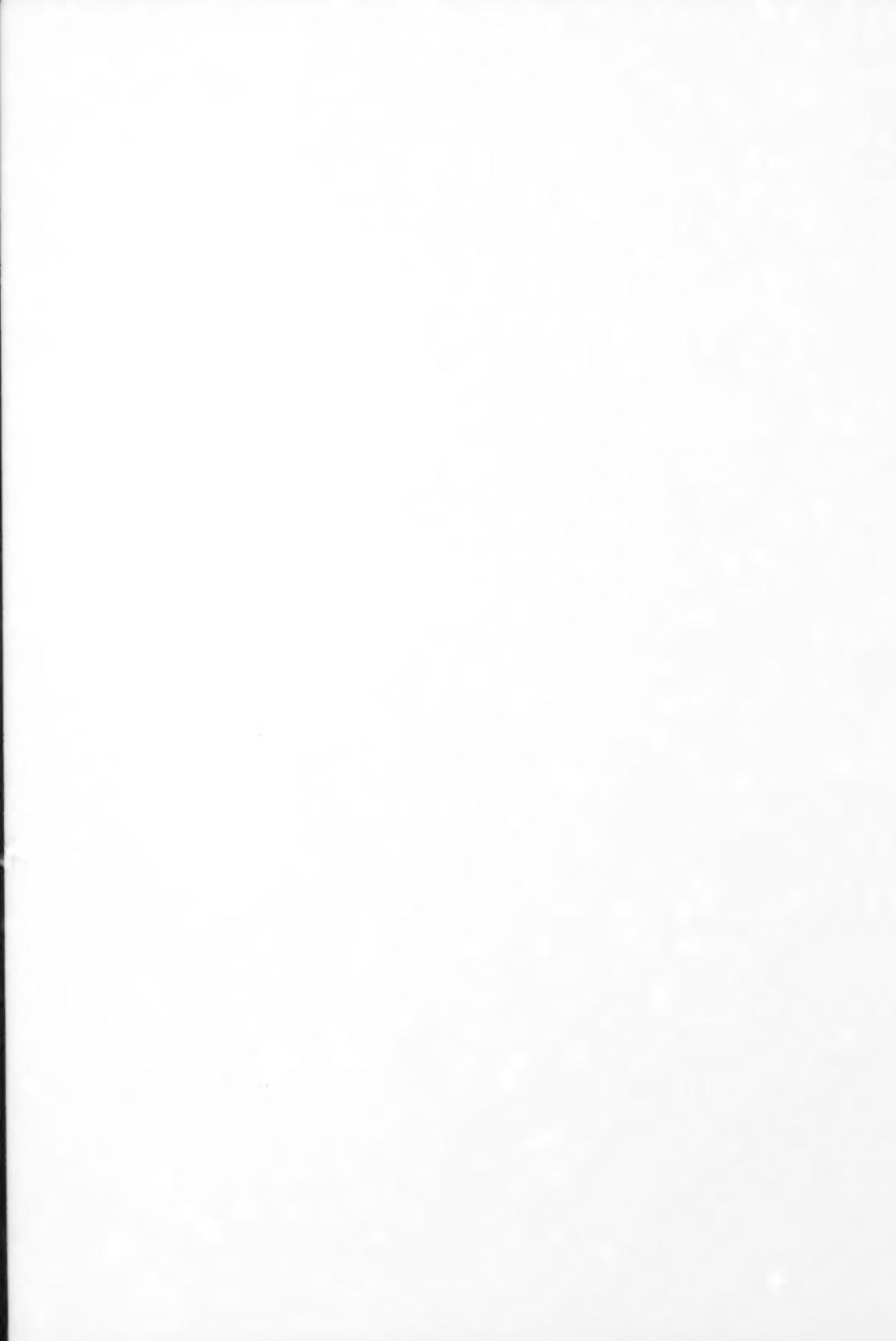
Avis Mysyk

Manitoba  
Commercial  
Market Gardening  
1945-1991



Class, Race  
and Ethnic Relations

**MANITOBA COMMERCIAL MARKET  
GARDENING, 1945-1997**



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*Avis Mysyk*

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Canadian Plains Research Center  
University of Regina  
2000

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## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	.vii
<b>Chapter 1: Social Relations in Canadian Agriculture .....</b>	1
<b>Class, Race and Ethnic Relations .....</b>	1
<b>Are Farmers a Class? .....</b>	4
<b>The "Indian Problem" .....</b>	8
<b>The Migratory Process .....</b>	10
<b>The Role of the State .....</b>	11
<b>Chapter 2: Market Gardening in Manitoba .....</b>	13
<b>Early Development .....</b>	13
<b>Post-war Trends in Market Gardening .....</b>	17
<b>Marketing Strategies .....</b>	24
<b>Marketing Cooperatives .....</b>	24
<b>The Vegetable Growers Association of Manitoba .....</b>	25
<b>The Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board .....</b>	27
<b>Contracts with Food Processors .....</b>	31
<b>Chapter 3: Farm Labour .....</b>	35
<b>Early Sources .....</b>	35
<b>Wartime Labour .....</b>	39
<b>Mexican Mennonites .....</b>	43
<b>The Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program .....</b>	46
<b>The Origins of the Program .....</b>	46
<b>The Structure of the Program .....</b>	47
<b>The Manitoba Farm Workers Association .....</b>	49
<b>The Program Today .....</b>	53
<b>Chapter 4: Bilateral and Trilateral Relations: Past, Present and Future .....</b>	57
<b>The United States-Mexico Bracero Program .....</b>	57
<b>The Future of Manitoba Commercial Market Gardening .....</b>	62
<b>Under the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement .....</b>	62
<b>Under the North American Free Trade Agreement .....</b>	64
<b>Summary and Conclusions .....</b>	69
<b>Appendices .....</b>	73
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	90
<b>Index .....</b>	99



## INTRODUCTION

**C**anadian agriculture is currently undergoing a major crisis. Not only has the cost-price squeeze forced many Canadian farmers off the land but neo-liberal trade policies<sup>1</sup> such as the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement (CUSTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) threaten the livelihood of many more. Crises in agriculture are not unique to the 1990s. They have occurred continuously, especially since 1945, as farmers have become integrated into the capitalist economy.<sup>2</sup> Increasing specialization and mechanization accompanied by intensification of market relations have led to competition between, and the development of class fractions, among those farmers who have managed to survive.

Crises in agriculture are of two interrelated types, long-term and short-term. Long-term crises are generated by the *cost-price squeeze*, a process whereby the cost of producing a commodity rises faster than the return to the farmer upon selling that commodity. Prior to 1945, such crises were often averted by successful lobbying on the part of influential farm organizations for the regulation of the price of commodities. In part, this was possible because the cost of production was relatively stable. Not so after 1945. Crises were now averted by increasing the volume of production through mechanization on a larger land base. This solution to the cost-price squeeze was pursued by many farmers: "They became the 'high-risk' entrepreneurs who would exchange debts for capital equipment and land on the gamble that productivity advantages would pay dividends" (Mitchell 1975: 19). The results were disastrous. Short-term crises generated by the *boom-and-bust cycle* of agriculture simply became more severe.

The boom-and-bust cycle means that any food shortages caused by a decline in production lead to high food prices. Motivated by high food prices, farmers increase production only to find consumers either unwilling or unable to pay more for that food. This results in food surpluses and ultimately in lower prices to farmers. The cycle is complete and begins again once smaller farmers have been eliminated from competition through bankruptcy.

Market gardening<sup>3</sup> in Manitoba has not been immune to these pressures, yet its anomalous characteristic of being labour- rather than capital-intensive has allowed it to expand in recent years. This expansion might not have occurred had it not been for the implementation in 1974 of the

Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program which promised Manitoba commercial market gardeners a potentially unlimited supply of labour.

Under conditions of labour shortages, there are at least four alternatives to labour import (Sassen-Koob 1978). The most common solution to labour shortages in Canadian agriculture has been mechanization. Given the perishable nature of their product, Manitoba market gardeners have pursued this alternative as far as possible. The alternative of increasing imports in other sectors of the economy in order to release labour for use in agriculture has limited applicability and might only occur if labour shortages were *absolute*, not *relative*.<sup>4</sup> The export of productive activities, a fairly recent phenomenon associated with agribusiness interests, has not been a viable alternative for most Canadian farmers.

Apart from mechanization, the only alternative to labour import available to Manitoba market gardeners has been the mobilization of domestic labour. Dissatisfaction on the part of farmers with the "inexperience" or "unreliability" of domestic labour eventually led to the alternative of labour import. Given the importance of the labour component in certain sectors of Canadian agriculture, this work traces the development of Manitoba commercial market gardening and its attendant labour needs.

The history of Manitoba agriculture reveals that its labour force has consisted of groups of workers from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. The main purpose of this work is to examine how class, race, and ethnic relations have manifested themselves in Manitoba commercial market gardening. Related to this are four specific objectives. The first is to determine the socioeconomic position of Manitoba commercial market gardeners in the Canadian class structure. The second is to examine past and present labour sources in Manitoba agriculture and, more specifically, in market gardening with regard to class, race and ethnicity. Two main classes have developed in Manitoba agriculture, the *petty bourgeoisie* (farmers) and the *proletariat* (farm workers). In the case of the petty bourgeoisie, class fractioning has taken the form of small, medium, and large producers divided along economic, political and/or ideological lines. In the case of farm workers, class fractioning has occurred along ethnic or, as some choose to view it, racial lines.

The third objective is to compare and contrast the former United States-Mexico Bracero Program and the present Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. Since the details of each agreement are remarkably similar, it is apparent that the former served as a model for the latter despite differences in how the programs have been implemented. The fourth and final objective is to evaluate the future of Manitoba commercial market gardening based upon the effects of both the CUSTA and the NAFTA. While the impact of the CUSTA was immediate, the effects of the NAFTA can only be speculated on at this time. In fact, the recent expansion of Manitoba commercial market gardening may be a temporary

phenomenon. Certain trends indicate that not only will marketing boards be phased out but the mobility of Mexican labour may be severely curtailed.

This study is formally delimited to south-central Manitoba since 1945. Choosing the region was fairly straightforward. Most vegetables can only be grown under certain soil and climatic conditions such as those found in south-central Manitoba. Choosing the year proved to be more difficult. I discovered that market gardening does not attain commercial status until a certain scale of production has been achieved. In Manitoba, the transition from *limited market* to *commercial market gardening* and the class fractioning that accompanied it began around 1945. I also discovered that the problem of alleged labour shortages and the possibility of hiring Mexican workers only came to the fore once this transition had begun. It is this transition period that provides the baseline for this study.

Initially, I had intended to focus exclusively on the origins and development of the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program itself. For reasons unclear to me at the time, I often was met with either guarded suspicion or else entirely ignored by farmers who coincidentally also regulate outsiders' access to Mexican workers. It was not until the president of the Manitoba Farm Workers Association (MFWA) granted me an interview that I began to understand why I was being received with such animosity. During the interview, the president informed me that the issue of Mexican labour was "politically hot" — so hot, I assume, that he ultimately declined further involvement in my study. The Employer Specialist at Winnipeg's Canada Employment and Immigration Centre (CEIC) also informed me that he could not divulge any "trade secrets" of the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

Curious as to why I now lacked access to almost all key players in the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, I managed to locate a government-sponsored study, rumored to be quite controversial, as well as back issues of local newspapers through which I was able to partially reconstruct the events surrounding the origins and development of the program. I discovered that the use of Mexican workers in Manitoba commercial market gardening gave rise to conflicts not only between farmers and local labour but between farmers and the provincial government as well, conflicts which are still very much alive in the minds of those who were involved. Although I explained that I was conducting independent research into the Canada-Mexico labour program in Manitoba, I was in all likelihood thought to be a union organizer looking to cause more trouble.

While I was disappointed with this unexpected turn of events, I was not surprised. Nelkin (1970) and Friedland and Nelkin (1971) note the reluctance of some growers to place students in farm labour camps in New York state as part of a teaching-research project. Satzewich (1991) also discovered that some information on the Canada-Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program was restricted under Canada's

Access to Information Act because it was deemed sensitive to either national security or diplomatic relations. Rather than giving up as do some anthropologists when their field work falters (Kent 1992; Nuñez 1972), I decided instead to incorporate the study of the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program into a history of Manitoba market gardening.

The research techniques by which I gathered this information included historical reconstruction,<sup>5</sup> informal interviewing,<sup>6</sup> participant observation,<sup>7</sup> and photography.<sup>7</sup> Because of the obstacles I originally encountered, the process eventually developed into a multifaceted research project whereby I verified or pursued one technique through others and these through as many sources as possible. Although the majority of my sources are readily accessible to the interested reader, I have maintained as far as possible the privacy of my informants and the confidentiality of our discussions.

#### Notes

1. Neo-liberalism, also called neo-conservatism, is the political ideology that has accompanied the economic process of globalization. Teeple (1995: 76) defines it as the policy of advancing private property rights in that it proposes "free market" solutions not only to economic, but also social problems. In general terms, this includes the privatization of public activity, the deregulation of private activity and dismantling the welfare state.
2. Implicit in the phrase "capitalist economy" is the transition from competitive capitalism (numerous individually owned small firms, minimal state participation) to monopoly capitalism (concentration of capital in fewer firms, dominant role of the state). The transition can also be characterized as one from the creation of absolute to relative surplus value (see Chapter 1).
3. "Market gardening" (or "truck farming" in Britain) is the popular term for that subsector of agriculture which involves the growing of potatoes and vegetables for other than home use. "Potato," "root crop," and "summer crop" production are the terms used in the industry itself. Market gardening becomes "commercial" once an acreage reaches a certain size.
4. Absolute labour shortages arise due to the depletion of the domestic labour supply. Relative labour shortages arise due to the refusal of domestic labour to work for low wages (Satzewich 1991).
5. Historical reconstruction was based on documents from the National Archives of Canada and the Provincial Archives of Manitoba and on the Canada Sessional Papers. Statistics Canada and Manitoba Agriculture census materials were also helpful as were back issues of such newspapers as *The Central Manitoba Farmer*, *The Manitoba Co-operator*, *The Union Farmer*, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and the *Winnipeg Tribune*.
6. Informal interviews on a variety of general issues were conducted with representatives of the National Farmers Union (Brandon) and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Winnipeg). More specific issues were pursued in informal interviews with the Employer Specialist for the Canada Employment and Immigration Centre (Winnipeg), the former Agricultural Manpower Officer and the Chief of the Horticultural Section for Manitoba Agriculture (Portage la Prairie and Carman, respectively), the past managers of Agricultural Employment Services (Portage la Prairie), both the

president of and a former activist in the Manitoba Farm Workers Association (Portage la Prairie and Winnipeg respectively), and the general manager of the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board (Winnipeg) who gave me the names, addresses, and phone numbers of its members. Of the forty-six whom I contacted by telephone or in person, by far the majority were potato producers who are ineligible for the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. Only ten of the forty-six were major vegetable producers and only six of these hired Mexicans. Two of the six refused to be interviewed at all.

7. At the behest of one grower, I did not include the photographs in my study. I used them as visual prompts in my interviews to clarify for myself the more technical aspects of the industry.



## — Chapter 1 —

# SOCIAL RELATIONS IN CANADIAN AGRICULTURE

Few case studies in the social sciences make explicit the theoretical orientation that informs their research. By way of comparison of three theoretical orientations commonly used in anthropology — the Marxist, the dependency, and the non-Marxist (typically functionalist) — I argue in favour of using the Marxist perspective to understand social relations in Canadian agriculture in general and Manitoba agriculture in particular.

Within the economic cycle of *production, exchange, distribution, and consumption*,<sup>1</sup> dependency theorists focus on the sphere of exchange, non-Marxists on that of distribution. But before one can exchange, distribute, or consume the product of one's labour, one must first produce it; hence, the Marxist focus on the economic sphere of production. And production relations are class relations, not race or ethnic relations with which the dependency and non-Marxist theorists respectively begin their analyses.

In order to understand the class position of farmers, the mobilization of certain ethnic (or racial) groups whether foreign or domestic as farm workers, or the role of the state in agriculture, Marxists first examine the evolving class structure of the society in question after which they consider the role that ethnic or racial differences may have played in shaping that structure.

### Class, Race, and Ethnic Relations

For Marxists, *classes* are defined on the basis of their *relations to the means of production*. In a capitalist society, there exist three fundamental relations to the means of production. The capitalist class, or *bourgeoisie*, owns the means of production and purchases the labour power of others to operate it; the working class, or *proletariat*, owns only its labour power which it sells to the capitalist class in return for a wage; and various "transitional" classes, such as the *petty bourgeoisie*, both own and operate the means of production. When individuals share the same position in relation to the means of production, they form a class *in itself*. Only when individuals become aware of their class position and collectively develop appropriate strategies to

defend their interests against those of other classes, do they become a class *for itself*. This distinction is complicated, however, by the existence of *class fractions* or the economic, political, and ideological divisions that can develop within a class and undermine its solidarity.

For dependency theorists, there has been but a single division of labour — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat — combined with multiple stratification since the sixteenth century (Frank 1975; Wallerstein 1979). From this perspective, the defining feature of capitalism is not the capital-wage labour relation but *relations of exchange*. Historically-specific production relations matter little as long as the proletariat, in whatever form it may take, yields part of the surplus value it creates to the bourgeoisie.

For non-Marxists, classes are defined as either statistical categories of individuals who share the same position with regard to their differential access to goods and services or else as status groups distinguished by differences in lifestyle. Class relations, if they are mentioned at all, are *relations of distribution* or people's perception of such.

More elusive than the concept of class are those of *race* and *ethnicity* which, because they are difficult to define, are sometimes used interchangeably. Hughes and Kallen (1974: 83) offer the following distinction between the two:

The concept *race* ... refers to any arbitrary classification of human populations utilizing such biological criteria as actual or assumed physiological and genetic differences. The concept *ethnicity* ... refers to any arbitrary classification of human populations utilizing the bio-cultural criterion of actual or assumed ancestry in conjunction with such socio-cultural criteria as actual or assumed nationality or religion.

Ethnicity may be defined in two ways. The *ethnic category* is "a conceptual or statistical category which may or may not correspond with an actual ... social group" (Hughes and Kallen 1974: 87). The *ethnic group* is one whose members "categorize themselves as being alike by virtue of common ancestry ... and interact together so as to develop a common culture and common forms of social organization" (Hughes and Kallen 1974: 88). The ethnic group may or may not correspond to the ethnic category depending on whether its membership is self- or other-defined.

The concept of race, of course, has no scientific basis. What exists is not "race" but physical difference; "race" is a word used to describe or refer to such difference. What does exist is *racism* or

those negative beliefs held by one group which identify and set apart another by attributing significance to some biological or other "inherent" characteristic(s) which it is said to possess, and which deterministically associate that characteristic(s) with some other (negatively evaluated) feature(s) or action(s) (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 22).

In an attempt to explain the increase of racism in the midst of economic recession, Bolaria and Li (1988a) distinguish between *racial group* and

*racial category*. This renewal of interest in the concept of race, however, is a "false problematic" (Miles 1982) and will not be pursued further here in this form.

This may very well be where Marxist, dependency, and non-Marxist theorists part company on the subject of race and ethnicity since, for the former, class remains the core analytical concept in the study of social relations while, for the latter two, it has become the racial or ethnic group or category.

Some non-Marxists, for example, have little problem explaining racial or ethnic factors. They are simply "anachronisms" in societies in which status is allocated on the basis of achieved rather than ascribed characteristics. The fact that some groups have not successfully assimilated into such societies, however, requires an explanation. The explanation, offered by other non-Marxists (Bell 1975; Glazer and Moynihan 1975), is found not in the process by which racial or ethnic inequalities are created and maintained but in the "rediscovery" of ethnicity as a legitimate topic of inquiry.

If for non-Marxists race and ethnicity replace class, for dependency theorists race and ethnicity appear to be synonymous with class. I use the term "appear" because the relation between class, race, and ethnicity is seldom clearly spelled out. Frank (1975: 90), for example, is all but silent on the issue, claiming only that organizational factors such as race and ethnicity "channel, concentrate, or disperse the diffusionary and exploitative relations to which the entire capitalist system and its participants are subject." Wallerstein, who has written fairly extensively on class, race, and ethnicity (1979, 1983, 1991), does little to clarify the issue.

Wallerstein is more successful in distinguishing the short- and long-term functions of classes versus those of ethnic groups. If the function of a class is to bargain for economic gain in the short run and to seize state power in the long run, the function of an ethnic group in the short run is to alter the distribution of goods according to some arbitrarily defined status:

Ethno-national consciousness is the constant resort of all those for whom class organization offers the risk of a loss of relative advantage through the normal workings of the market and class dominated political bargaining (Wallerstein 1979: 228).

The function of an ethnic group in the long run is to support the status quo by providing substantial personal benefits for the ethnic elite:

To be sure, this breeds confusion. But there is less confusion in the advantages drawn by the upper class hangers-on of an oppressed ethno-nation than in the failure of the working-class movements in the core capitalist countries to represent the interests of the weakest strata of the proletariat (of "minority" ethnic status) and thereby prevent a growing gap ... between the interests of workers of upper ethnic status and those of lower ethnic status (Wallerstein 1979: 230).

Indeed, a common sense of cultural identity may serve to obscure class divisions within an ethnic group (Miles 1982).

Marxists would argue that under no condition can racial or ethnic relations be abstracted from the specific production or class relations of which they form a part. In order to understand the relation between class, race, and ethnicity, one first identifies the dominant mode of production and the main classes that constitute it. Once the class structure has been established, one identifies the political, economic, and ideological characteristics of each class to determine the way class fractions may have formed over time. If class fractions have formed on the basis of physical and/or cultural traits, this is *racialization*,

a process of delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics (Miles 1982: 157).

Racialization differs from racism in that:

The process [of racialization] can have as its object the identification and reproduction of groups which are self- or other-defined, while the criteria used to define the groups can be positively or negatively evaluated (Miles 1982: 157).<sup>2</sup>

The analysis of physical or cultural differences is always secondary to that of class analysis since such differences do not alter the basic structure of production relations.

#### **Are Farmers a Class?**

Typical of most literature on Canadian agriculture is the tendency to treat farmers as a homogeneous class distinguished, if at all, by region (Stirling and Conway 1988). At first glance, then, the question "Are farmers a class?" seems simplistic. Of course farmers are a class, but which class? Depending upon the theoretical approach taken, responses vary. For non-Marxists (Abell 1968; Tyler 1968; Verner 1968), farmers no longer constitute a class but are divided between those who see farming as a business and those who see farming as a way of life, the latter being those to whom non-Marxists apply Lewis' (1966) concept of the *culture of poverty*.<sup>3</sup> For dependency theorists (Ghorayshi 1986, 1987, 1990), farmers are capitalist if they hire five or more person-years of labour. For Marxists, Canadian farmers are mainly petty bourgeoisie divided, especially since 1945, into small, medium, and large class fractions.

The dependency argument is worth examining more closely since it is misleading in its simplicity. Contrary to Ghorayshi (1986, 1987), the key to determining whether or not an enterprise is capitalist is not the number of wage workers employed but the amount of *capital* available to the employer. If the amount of capital frees the employer from manual labour and allows him to establish what Marx in 1848 called the *capital-relation*, or the total separation of management and labour, then the enterprise is capitalist. If the employer both manages and labours and only seasonally calls upon a reserve army of workers — as do Manitoba commercial market gardeners — then petty commodity, not capitalist, production prevails. "The intermittent

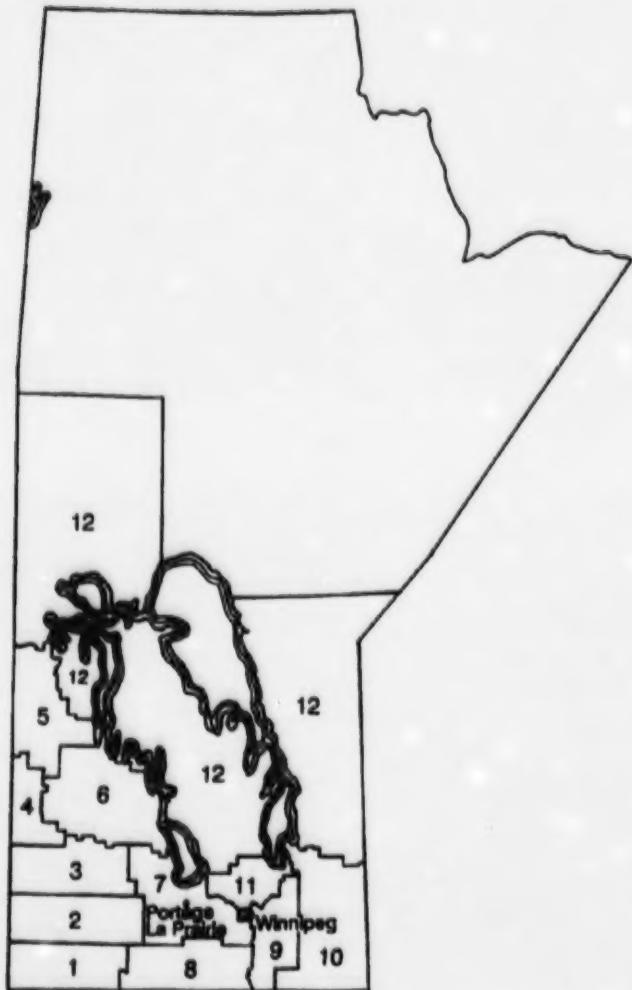
hiring of temporary labour cannot be a criterion for capitalist agriculture" (Clement 1983: 234).

To "prove" that a capitalist farm is one in which a minimum of five person-years of labour is employed, Ghorayshi (1986) erroneously invokes Marx's *labour theory of value* rather than his *theory of surplus value* as follows.

The working day is divided into two parts, *necessary labour time*, or that part of the working day during which the labourer produces value equal to the value of his labour power, and *surplus labour time*, that part of the working day that extends beyond necessary labour time during which the worker produces *surplus value* for the employer. There are various ways in which the employer can increase his surplus value. In the early stages of capitalism, he may extend the length of the working day, make work continuous without breaks, apply crude discipline through direct control, and/or hire the whole of the worker's family at a reduced rate. That which then accrues to the employer is called *absolute surplus value*. In the later stages of capitalism, he may implement other technical and/or social changes in production. He may, for example, mechanize and/or hire a number of workers simultaneously. That which then accrues to the employer is called *relative surplus value*.

Any or all of these strategies may be pursued by both capitalist and petty bourgeois farmers if they hope to survive the cost-price squeeze, yet Ghorayshi (1986) insists Marx's "law of value" [sic] only applies to farms on which five or more person-years of labour are employed. What types of farms might these be? Ignoring the capital- or labour-intensive nature of farm type as well as regional differences in scale, Ghorayshi (1987) claims that fruit and vegetable, poultry, and cattle operations tend to be capitalist while grain and dairy operations do not. At the same time, she claims that, as of 1981, only 0.3 percent of farms in Manitoba and 0.7 percent in Canada were actually capitalist (Ghorayshi 1986: 151, 1990: 220). These figures do not support her argument that most Canadian farms are capitalist (see Figure 1 and Table 1 which illustrate that no more than 1.8 person-years of labour are hired in any agricultural region in south-central Manitoba).

Contrary to Ghorayshi, most researchers contend that the majority of Canadian farmers are petty bourgeois based upon the criteria of both owning and operating the means of production (Johnson 1981). Distinguishing class fractions is more difficult. Criteria such as the size of farm and the value of agricultural products sold, the value of capital assets, the capital- or labour-intensive nature of the operation, and the number and type of wage workers (full-time/part-time or permanent/seasonal) all vary through time and across commodity groups (see Skogstad 1987). In conjunction with economic criteria, some researchers (*Briarpatch* 1982; Stirling and Conway 1988) have examined differences in political and/or ideological tendencies that have developed between small, medium, and large producers since 1945.



*Figure 1: Census Agricultural Regions, Manitoba 1991 (Source: Manitoba Agricultural Yearbook). Cartography by P. Chapin, Thunder Bay.*

Small farmers or "populists," who tend to be represented by the National Farmers Union (NFU), are those whose livelihood is most threatened by crises in Canadian agriculture. Until recently, the NFU has found it difficult to form alliances with groups outside the farming sector. For this reason, populists are most likely to support state intervention on their behalf. They are also most likely to combine farming with other occupations since the surplus value extracted from producers by the non-farm sector must derive from the labour component (family or hired) of the

**Table 1**  
**Hired Agricultural Labour by Census Agricultural Region, Manitoba 1981-96**

	Weeks of Paid Labour			
	Year Round		Seasonal	
	Farms Reporting	No. of Weeks/Workers*	Farms Reporting	No. of Weeks
<i>Province</i>				
1981	2,347	133,375/1.1	7,611	114,354
1986	2,617	167,867/1.2	10,798	174,839
1991	3,487	208,745/1.2	8,813	145,326
1996	3,992	290,052/1.4	7,430	146,805
<i>Region 7</i>				
1981	302	18,963/1.2	927	18,393
1986	306	24,062/1.5	1,313	33,171
1991	413	35,843/1.7	1,098	26,193
1996	528	45,880/1.7	915	25,774
<i>Region 8</i>				
1981	426	25,942/1.2	1,174	20,990
1986	479	34,379/1.4	1,819	31,575
1991	623	36,506/1.1	1,494	27,362
1996	740	53,570/1.4	1,214	24,150
<i>Region 9</i>				
1981	340	26,689/1.5	854	13,504
1986	418	32,310/1.5	1,198	19,058
1991	538	39,374/1.4	948	17,399
1996	554	52,641/1.8	870	20,697
<i>Region 11</i>				
1981	194	11,764/1.2	441	6,914
1986	200	13,293/1.3	629	9,602
1991	208	13,693/1.3	464	6,217
1996	230	19,509/1.6	384	8,013

\* The number of workers (year round and seasonal) was not given by Statistics Canada. One can calculate the number of year-round workers in the following way: (total number of weeks + 52 weeks) + number of farms = number of workers. One cannot calculate the number of seasonal workers, however, since the number of weeks worked is unknown.

Sources: 1981 - Statistics Canada, 1982, 1981 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba, Catalogue 96-908, Table 25; 1986 - Statistics Canada, 1987, 1986 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba, Catalogue 96-109, Table 15; 1991 - Statistics Canada, 1992, 1991 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba (Pt. 1), Catalogue 95-363, Table 31.1; 1996 - Statistics Canada, 1997, 1996 Census of Canada, Agricultural Profile of Canada, Catalogue 95-178-XPB, Table 32.1.

farm (Hedley 1976). Medium farmers or "vested interest groups" are typically represented by marketing boards or agencies, as are many of Manitoba's commercial market gardeners. Medium farmers tend to develop alliances with interests on the output side of farming such as wholesalers

and retailers but, because of their vulnerable position in the sphere of exchange, they tolerate limited state intervention to protect their largely regional markets. Large farmers are represented by such "right-wing commodity groups" as beef, pork, and grain producers' associations. Because these groups mainly supply the export market, they take a strong free-enterprise stance and advocate an end to all restrictions on production and marketing. Typically, they forge alliances with interest groups on both the input and output sides of farming such as banks, machinery and chemical companies, and food processors.

The difficulty in distinguishing class fractions is complicated by the fact that most Canadian farmers are, on the one hand, small businessmen who view the capital-labour relation through conservative eyes and, on the other, victims of the business ethic who gain market protection through their own union-like powers (Wilson 1990). In other words, they are both owners and operators of the means of production.

### **The "Indian Problem"**

The success of Manitoba agriculture can be partially attributed to the participation of aboriginal peoples in farm labour over the past one hundred years. Nonetheless, their socioeconomic position has noticeably declined over time. Most scholars recognize that the "Indian problem" was created and is perpetuated by Euro-Canadians, yet non-Marxists (Bird 1984) explain the Indian problem as a manifestation of the culture of poverty. "You need a job?" Bird (1984: 76) admonishes reserve Indians, "Find one. None available? Make one." Dependency theorists (Buckley 1992; Carstens 1971; Dunning 1964; Frideres 1988b) explain the Indian problem as one of cultural domination, political oppression, and economic dependence through exploitation of their land and labour under internal colonialism. While one could debate whether or not Indians have been nothing more than passive victims of colonialism for the past two hundred years, there is little doubt that they have been exploited for both their land and labour. Nonetheless, the concept of *exploitation* — the direct or indirect extraction of surplus value from producers — implies the existence of class relations which Wolpe (1975) argues are residual to the dependency approach. Marxists (Knight 1978; Loxley 1981; Miller 1981) attempt to locate Canada's aboriginal peoples within the context of capitalist development, tracing their socioeconomic demise from full participation in the wider economy to pauperism. The issue is far from being resolved, especially since aboriginal peoples often are defined or define themselves not in terms of class position but as racial or ethnic categories or groups.

Is it possible to locate Canada's aboriginal peoples in a wider socio-economic context without reifying their racial or ethnic status? One may begin by referring, as Marx did, to the formation of the relative surplus population or *reserve army of labour* which allows capital to expand and contract without major disruption to the process of accumulation. The *floating surplus population*, represented today by unemployment insurance

recipients (Braverman 1974), consists of those workers who are alternatively drawn into then expelled from production as industries expand and contract. The *latent surplus population* consists of those workers who have been displaced by mechanization in agriculture. The *stagnant surplus population* consists of those workers whose employment is irregular or casual. Lastly are the *paupers* or those who have been absolutely impoverished by capitalist exploitation, represented today by welfare recipients (Braverman 1974).

How do Canada's aboriginal peoples fit into this process? Knight (1978) maintains that, after the fur-trade era, Indians did not simply become "redundant" to the economy. Instead, they became part of the country's active work force until at least 1945 by combining intermittent wage labour in primary resource industries with petty commodity production and traditional subsistence activities. While the transition from indigenous economies to reserve dependence occurred more rapidly on the Prairies than elsewhere in Canada, Indians did not acquire the characteristics of a reserve army of labour until after 1945 when welfare payments began to replace a living wage.

In his study of Manitoba's Indian reserve system, Miller (1981) identifies aboriginal peoples in the late 1800s not as part of the active labour force but as part of the floating surplus population seasonally employed in agriculture as well as engaged in petty commodity production. Miller would likely agree with Knight (1978: 180) that "Indian workers were not a colonial reserve labour force in any simple way," especially since there is no evidence to suggest that they were used to depress wage rates or to undermine the struggles of non-Indian workers. The only function they seem to have fulfilled for capital at the time was to provide labour power during periods of expansion and contraction (Miller 1981).

It was not until after 1945 that many Indians in southern Manitoba became, and remain in dwindling numbers today, part of the latent surplus population displaced by mechanization in agriculture. The lack of other employment opportunities has been well documented by the Manitoba Department of Agriculture and Immigration (1959) and the Department of Indian Affairs (1966), which illustrate the increasingly casual nature of jobs at this time. It would not violate Dunning's (1964) distinction between Type A and Type B reserves to extend the classification of stagnant surplus population typical of the north (Loxley 1981) to the south as well. With the piecemeal introduction of social assistance to Manitoba's aboriginal peoples since the 1960s, many have been reduced to pauperism as the employment rate on some reserves has risen to 75 or 100 percent. The question of who could possibly benefit from such impoverishment is answered in part by Frideres (1988a: 372), who claims that for every non-Indian the state spends \$740 per year while for every treaty Indian it spends \$530, a savings of \$210 per Indian per year or a total of \$52 million per year.

The historical transformation of Manitoba's aboriginal peoples from

what is considered either part of the active working class (Knight 1978) or a floating surplus population (Miller 1981), to a latent surplus, to a stagnant surplus (Loxley 1981) and, finally, to paupers or welfare recipients puts to rest any doubts as to the validity of Marx's *absolute general law of capitalist accumulation* whereby the accumulation of wealth at one pole is at the same time the accumulation of misery at the other. And, as Knight (1978: 180, emphasis added) explains:

Racial stereotypes and racism directed against Indians certainly existed and were extremely widespread... However, I would hold that racism was not the central *cause* of exploitation and expropriation of Indian people but merely a *rationale* for such.

They have become, in Miles' (1982) words, a racialized fraction of the working class.

### The Migratory Process

Although the Canada-Commonwealth Caribbean and the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programs have been in effect since 1966 and 1974 respectively, very few researchers have studied the former and none the latter. Non-Marxists such as Cecil and Ebanks (1991) adopt a free-market model of the mobility of *factors of production* — goods and services, capital and labour — to show that, due to racism, West Indian farm workers in southern Ontario are denied their "full share of entitlement" under multiculturalism. The authors do not consider the possibility that the political and legal constraints imposed upon migrant labourers in the receiving country are what make them so attractive to capital (Gibson and Graham 1986; Miles 1987). Racism simply provides the rationale for denying migrant labourers such entitlement. Dependency theorists (Bolaria and Li 1988b; Wall 1992) assume the "permanent necessity" of foreign workers in Canada due to the functions they fulfill for capital, such as the provision of cheap labour and the transfer of the cost of reproduction of that labour to the sending countries. Given the recent mobility of capital on a global scale, however, many researchers have abandoned the assumption of the permanency of migrant labour (Bach and Schraml 1982; Gibson and Graham 1986; Miles 1982).

In order to correct the passivity that the dependency perspective typically accords human subjects, its advocates now call for an analysis of household subsistence strategies within the wider social, economic, and political contexts in which they occur (Bach and Schraml 1982; Schmink 1984; Wood 1981, 1982). Marxists have moved in the opposite direction. Rejecting what they consider the economic determinism of Castles and Kosack's (1985) classic work on capitalism and migrant labour, they focus instead on the role of the state, the ideology of racism, and the incorporation of migrant labour into specific production relations in receiving countries. Phizacklea and Miles (1980), for example, concentrate on the intersection of class, race, and ethnic identification of both domestic and foreign workers in Britain to explain their level of involvement in certain

types of political action. They conclude that, in times of economic recession, class consciousness is in danger of being fragmented by racist attitudes towards immigrants and that, due to mutual hostility and suspicion, the formation of interethnic alliances between workers from the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent seems unlikely. Satzewich (1991) focusses on the racist immigration policy of admitting West Indian farm workers into Canada on a temporary rather than a permanent basis. Such studies make it clear that the ideology of racism influences how certain groups not only view themselves but are viewed by others.

### The Role of the State

Until recently, social scientists have largely ignored the role of the state in capitalist societies. Non-Marxists would argue that such societies are, of necessity, stratified on the basis of individual or group achievement. Thus, the state must refrain from "meddling" in the economy and, instead, allow the invisible and non-discriminatory hand of the market to determine the worth of the individual or the group.

Contrary to dependency theorists who assume that the state is the direct instrument of the capitalist class (Wallerstein 1979), Marxists argue that the state acts in the general interests of capital by fulfilling the three basic but contradictory functions of *accumulation*, *legitimization*, and *coercion*. The accumulation function consists of four main strategies (Basran and Hay 1988; Panitch 1980):

- (1) to regulate, through interest rates and taxation, the fiscal and monetary climate for economic growth through private enterprise;
- (2) to underwrite the private risks of production at public expense;
- (3) to provide the technical infrastructure for capitalist development through public utilities; and
- (4) to supply the capitalist labour market through the control of land and immigration policies and to absorb the social costs of production through education, health care, unemployment insurance, and welfare.

This last strategy of the accumulation function also forms part of the state's legitimization function, the purpose of which is to defuse political unrest on the part of subordinate groups or classes. In fact, the state may choose to deflect attention away from inequality by defining it as an ethnic or racial rather than as a class problem (Thompson 1989). Only when the legitimization function fails does the state resort to its coercive function to suppress popular or working-class resistance through force.

Nowhere were the contradictory functions of the state more evident than in its refusal for almost twenty years to supply commercial market gardeners in Ontario with migrant labour from the Caribbean (Satzewich 1991), that is, to exercise certain aspects of its accumulation function on behalf of capital. Despite persistent lobbying on the part of influential farm organizations from 1947 to 1963, the state flatly denied that labour shortages existed in the industry. Increased pressure on the state only

provoked the response that farmers themselves were to blame for their labour recruitment and retention problems because of their unwillingness to provide domestic workers with adequate wages, housing, and transportation. Not until 1965 did the state grudgingly agree that farmers' labour problems may not be under their direct control and begin to negotiate the terms of a contract by which West Indian workers would be allowed into Canada on a seasonal basis. The response of the state to requests for Mexican workers by Manitoba commercial market gardeners followed a similar pattern ten years later.<sup>5</sup>

In Ontario, the state was concerned about potential "race relations" problems if it were to admit black workers into Canada. The state actually preferred Mexican to Caribbean workers because they were "racially" closer to Canada's white majority (Satzewich 1991) but apparently not close enough to warrant citizenship status. In Manitoba, its concern was to justify the use of Mexican workers in light of high unemployment rates on Indian reserves. Ironically, the "race relations" problem in Manitoba came to manifest itself as blatant racism not toward Mexican but toward Indian farm workers, an odd twist on much of the literature which shows that immigrant, not domestic, labour is the target of racism (see, for example, Bustamante 1983; Castles and Kosack 1985; Miles 1982; Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Satzewich 1991).

#### Notes

1. Production involves the transformation of raw materials into needed or wanted goods. Exchange is the transfer of goods between parties; distribution refers to the relative share of goods that each party receives in exchange. Consumption uses up that which has been produced, exchanged, and distributed and the economic cycle begins again.
2. The concept of racialization thus subsumes those of ethnic group, ethnic category, racial group, and racial category.
3. The culture of poverty thesis argues that sets of values which sustain poverty, such as fatalism and the inability to defer gratification, are perpetuated generation after generation.
4. While extremely complex, Marx's labour theory of value does no more than explain the transfer of equivalent value from one commodity (labour power) to another (money), not the capitalist or petty bourgeois nature of an enterprise.
5. The change in attitude of the federal government toward importing temporary workers from the Caribbean and Mexico corresponded to changes in Canada's immigration policy in 1962, 1967, and again in 1974. These changes entailed a shift from a post-war policy of "white only or white if possible" (Hawkins 1977) to one of "tap on, tap off" (Parai 1975), thus tying immigration more closely to Canada's economic needs. Ideally, this allows for increased immigration during economic expansion and decreased immigration during economic contraction. In reality, these changes represent "the subservience of public policy to private interest," the best example of which is Canada's guest-worker programs (Cappon 1975: 52). While this may be true, it is no coincidence that such workers are denied citizenship. Their temporary status in Canada is not only due to economic imperatives but also to the persistence of racism in Canada's immigration policy (Satzewich 1991).

## — Chapter 2 —

### MARKET GARDENING IN MANITOBA

The historical development of Canadian agriculture has tended toward regional specialization. Atlantic Canada is dominated by horticulture, especially potatoes, fruits, and vegetables; central Canada by dairy and pork production and horticulture, primarily fruits and vegetables; the Prairies by grains, particularly wheat, and cattle.<sup>1</sup> British Columbia is the most diversified.

Manitoba agriculture is also fairly diversified (see Figure 2) compared to Saskatchewan and Alberta. Its most important commodities are wheat and cattle, although canola and pork production are on the rise. The dairy, poultry, and egg industries are important to the province<sup>2</sup> as are the sugar beet industry and horticulture, mainly potatoes. In fact, the value of potato production on the Prairies has come to rival that of Atlantic Canada (see Table 2). Vegetable production is a comparatively small but robust industry in Manitoba. While its history is somewhat unique, it is nonetheless representative of trends in the whole of Canadian agriculture from its efforts to modernize<sup>3</sup> and expand its productive base despite a lack of commitment on the part of the state to establish a level playing field in the sphere of exchange, through the struggle by medium and large producers to survive the cost-price squeeze to the detriment of small producers, to the challenges of meeting the requirements of the food-processing industry.

#### Early Development

The origins of market gardening in Manitoba are humble. The first concerted attempt at "systematic field culture" (Morton 1985: 70) was made in the Red River Colony in 1812. Colonists and Métis alike endured the vagaries of nature until 1824 when the first good crops were finally harvested. Not until 1827, however, did agriculture become firmly established in the Colony. Cereals such as wheat, oats, and barley were successful. Potatoes, corn, and turnips were also successful and were produced for local needs. Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, both colonists and new immigrants who gained access to lands along the Red and Assiniboine continued to cultivate only on river lots for several practical reasons. Not only were the lots close to natural resources such as water and timber but the river bank silt was easier to work with the farm implements of the time

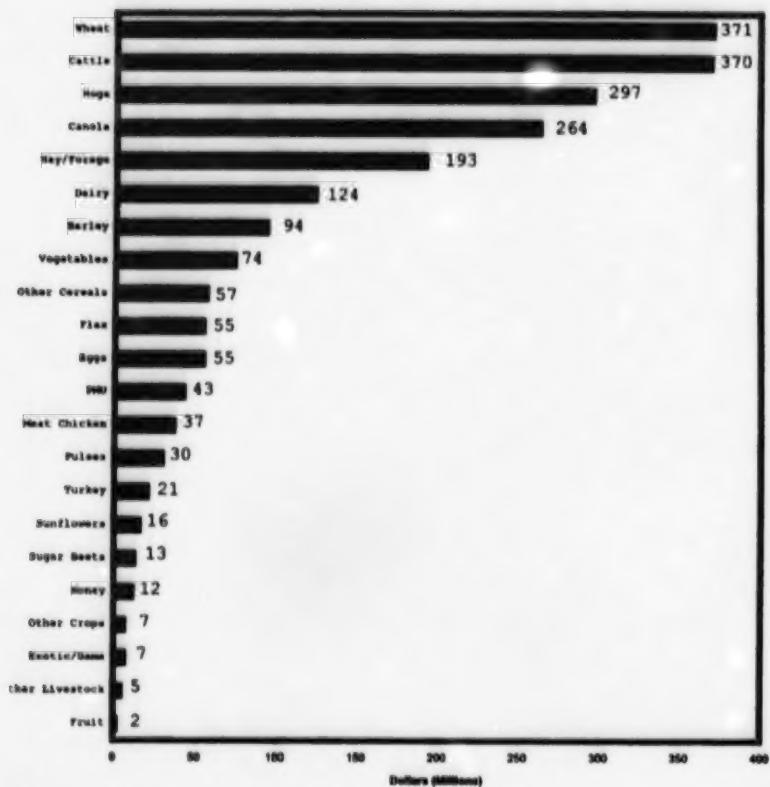


Figure 2. Value of farm production in Manitoba (1993).

Source: *Growing Manitoba. Agriculture in the Classroom*. Manitoba Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

than were the surrounding swamplands and clay (Morton 1985). Labour-intensive and early-market crops occupied small acreages close to the rivers; larger acreages further back from the rivers were given over to potatoes. Until the late 1930s, almost 90 percent of market gardening in Manitoba was located on these lots.

Growers would combine their earnings from market gardening with those from other small businesses such as trucking, operating sawmills, or mink-ranching, or from wage labour as field hands on neighbours' farms (Peters 1988). To varying degrees, all were assisted in their gardening endeavours by government-sponsored societies and institutes whose goals were to expand agriculture and increase its productivity.

The first of these institutes to be established was the Brandon Experimental Farm in 1888 where exploratory research into plant adaptability, especially that of wheat and potatoes, was carried out. In 1905, the

Table 2 Horticulture in the Regions						
	Millions of Dollars (1990)					
	British Columbia	Prairies	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic	Canada
Field Vegetables	50	33	270	124	20	497
Floriculture	74	44	246	86	29	479
Potatoes	15	103	40	51	170	379
Fruits	109	8	150	51	46	364
Nursery	60	18	150	34	8	271
Mushrooms	30	25	76	6	3	140
Greenhouse Tomatoes	29	9	50	37	3	128
Total	367	239	982	390	280	2,257
% by Region	16	11	44	17	12	100

Source: Employment and Immigration Canada, *Horticulture Industry, Organizing for the Future: Human Resource Issues and Opportunities, National Report*, Table 2.7 (Ottawa: Ernst and Young, 1992).

Manitoba Agricultural College was established and, in 1915, the Morden Research Station, but it was not until the Depression and war years (1929-1945) that any notable advances were made in market gardening. During the 1930s, for example, the Morden Research Station disseminated information on recommended plant varieties by region in order to promote agricultural diversification. With regard to unused land in south-central Manitoba, the Department of Agriculture and Immigration concluded at the time that

Where fertile soil occurs in close proximity to a large city, or if the transportation facilities are good and costs low, the most economical use of such land is generally the growing of vegetables and small fruits. A small acreage is usually sufficient for the market gardener, and the price of the land is too high to allow for any but this most intensive use (Murchie 1936: 48).

And, during World War II, the Manitoba Agricultural College initiated a program of vegetable seed production in order to meet local food shortages. Despite these advances, potato and vegetable production in Manitoba played a very minor role in either wartime economy compared to wheat production and livestock raising. Only after the industry's expansion in 1945 did the Manitoba Department of Agriculture begin to publish complete statistics on both potato and vegetable production.

Today, Manitoba commercial market gardening is a multimillion dollar business. Why, then, the relatively belated interest on the part of the Dominion Government in promoting the industry? For one reason, the West had been slow to produce an agricultural staple in enough abundance to support the commercial, financial, and industrial interests of the East. Since wheat production seemed the most promising, it became the

primary focus of agricultural institutes until the 1930s when the market for wheat collapsed. Only then did the government realize that crop diversification rather than exclusive dependence on wheat should be pursued. Still, the Prairies continue to be primarily a wheat and secondarily a livestock economy. In fact, diversification has proved "remarkably unsuccessful" in Manitoba since markets for special crops and field vegetables are simply not as lucrative as are those for wheat (Wilson 1981: 154). For another reason, the government had devoted far more time overall to immigration and the settlement of the West, which had got off to a disappointing start, than to the extension of technical assistance to farmers (Fowke 1978).

Even more problematic were the protective tariffs on goods that eastern manufacturers had imposed on western farmers. On the one hand, farmers were encouraged to expand and modernize their holdings; on the other, the government was reluctant to assist in the sphere of marketing due to the belief that a free market would lead to fair and adequate incomes for all.

Dyson's Pickles, one of the first processing plants to be built in Winnipeg in 1887, provided an outlet for cucumbers, cauliflower, and onions. Small farmers' markets, one on the corner of Dufferin Avenue and a second on Colony Street, existed as well. Most market gardeners, however, sold their produce door-to-door using horse-drawn carts until complaints by retail grocers about these "peddling" activities prompted city councilors to open a Central Farmers' Market behind City Hall in 1914. But a central marketing location was no solution to the problem of having to "buy dear and sell cheap," the beginning of the cost-price squeeze from which farmers have never been able to escape. Some began to take action.

The years 1910 to 1930 saw the rise of "agrarian populism," the organized protest by small farmers from British Columbia to the Maritimes against the effects of unfettered capitalist development (Conway 1981). In 1910, the Canadian Council of Agriculture presented the first of a series of resolutions to the Dominion Government demanding, with limited success, "reciprocal Free Trade between Canada and the United States in all horticultural, agricultural and animal products, spraying materials, fertilizers, illuminating, fuel and lubricating oils, cement, fish and lumber" (Morton 1967: 297). By 1921, the concern had evolved to include the "[extension] of co-operative agencies to cover the whole field of marketing" (Morton 1967: 305). Following the lead of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association which had been the official voice of all Manitoba farmers since 1903, some market gardeners began to organize themselves into early co-operatives.

However cohesive it may have been, this class-based response of the traditional petty bourgeoisie to the growing power of capital rapidly disintegrated after World War II (Stirling and Conway 1988), just as its common interests with the working class had, decades earlier (Phillips 1990):

Ignoring, or never fully understanding, their real location in the larger economy, it is not surprising that Populists fail to see themselves as representing a class from the past which stands between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and whose interests lie with neither, yet whose historical fate it is to join one or the other as the logic of capitalist competition threatens its members' ability to exist (Conway 1981: 6).

### **Post-war Developments in Market Gardening**

After 1945, certain trends began to appear as Canadian agriculture was increasingly integrated into the capitalist economy. These trends, which include the appearance of larger but fewer farms, increasing expenses and, for many, decreasing income, correlate strongly with the division of the traditional petty bourgeoisie into small, medium, and large class fractions and even with the formation of a small capitalist class. Manitoba farmers in general and market gardeners in particular were not immune to these trends.

Table 3 Numbers and Size of Farms, Manitoba, 1946-1996		
Year	Number of Farms	Average Size (acres)
1946	54,448	306
1951	52,383	338
1956	49,201	364
1961	43,306	420
1966	39,747	480
1971	34,981	543
1976	32,104	593
1981	29,442	639
1986	27,336	700
1991	25,706	743
1996	24,383	784

Sources: 1946-1986 - Manitoba Agriculture Yearbook 1991, Table 109; 1991 - Statistics Canada 1992, 1991 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba (Pt. 1), Catalogue 95-363, Table 11.1; 1996 - Statistics Canada 1997, 1996 Census of Canada, Agricultural Profile of Manitoba, Catalogue 95-178-XPB, Table 2.1.

The most notable trend has been the decrease in the number of farms in Manitoba combined with an increase in the size of those remaining (see Table 3). It must be kept in mind, however, that the figures conceal the range of variability in farm size (see Tables 4 and 5).<sup>4</sup> Although the divisions between small, medium, and large farms are arbitrary, one nonetheless notices the tendency of small farms to increase or to hold steady in number over the years, of medium farms to decrease in number, and of large farms to definitely increase in number.

Stirling and Conway (1988) suggest that this trend may illustrate a "disappearing middle" or a polarization of farms into small and large. Why this

Table 4  
Percentage of Farms Classified by Size, Manitoba, 1951-1966

Acres	1951	1956	1961	1966
1-4	1.3	0.9	0.9	1.1
5-10	2.2	2.2	1.3	1.6
11-50	4.5	4.2	3.2	3.3
51-100	4.9	4.6	3.9	3.8
101-200	25.5	22.5	19.0	15.7
201-299	7.8	7.8	8.1	7.1
300-479	29.0	29.0	28.8	26.7
480-639	12.0	13.6	15.1	15.3
640-959	9.4	11.1	13.5	16.0
960-1,279	2.2	2.6	3.7	5.3
1,280 and over	1.2	1.5	2.5	4.1

Sources: 1951-1956 - Statistics Canada 1957, 1956 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba, Table 3; 1961-1966 - Statistics Canada 1973, 1971 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba, Catalogue 96-708, Table 4.

Table 5  
Percentage of Farms Classified by Size, Manitoba, 1971-1996

Acres	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996
under 10	1.9	1.9	2.6	2.8	2.3	3.4
10-69	4.9	5.8	6.2	6.3	6.5	7.7
70-259	18.3	17.6	18.3	17.9	18.4	19.2
240-399	22.1	19.3	16.9	15.6	14.5	13.4
400-559	17.5	15.8	14.0	12.5	11.8	10.1
560-759	14.2	14.3	13.2	12.8	11.9	10.4
760-1,119	12.5	14.1	14.3	14.3	14.3	13.6
1,120-1,599	5.5	6.6	8.0	9.1	9.8	10.0
1,600-2,239	1.9	2.6	3.8	4.7	5.2	6.0
2,240-2,879	0.6	0.9	1.3	2.0	2.1	2.9
2,880-3,519	0.8	1.1	1.4	2.0	1.1	1.3
3,520 and over	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.1

Sources: 1971-1986 - Statistics Canada 1987, 1986 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba, Catalogue 96-109 Table 29; 1991 - Statistics Canada 1992, 1991 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba (Pt. 1), Catalogue 95-363, Table 11.1; 1996 - Statistics Canada 1997, 1996 Census of Canada, Agricultural Profile of Manitoba, Catalogue 95-178-XPB, Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

is occurring is uncertain but may be related to the fact that tax incentives introduced in 1972 made the consolidation of farms not only easier but even advantageous for their owners. Thus, while the number of family farms has decreased since 1971, the number of partnership arrangements and legally constituted companies has increased (see Table 6). These latter arrangements allow farm property to be transferred from generation to generation without placing an excessive financial burden on either (Hay

Table 6  
Number of Farms Classified by Type of Organization, Manitoba, 1946-1996

Year	Total	Individual or Family	Partnership <sup>1</sup>	Legally Constituted Company <sup>2</sup>			Other <sup>3</sup>
				Family	Other	Other <sup>3</sup>	
1946	54,448	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1951	52,583	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1956	49,201	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1961	43,306	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1966	39,747	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1971	34,981	32,183	2,094	548	67	89	
1976	32,104	29,748	973	1,089	165	129	
1981	29,442	25,701	2,653	882	85	121	
1986	27,336	22,869	3,229	1,035	81	122	
1991	25,706	17,017	7,075	1,279	207	128	
1996	24,383	15,340	6,847	1,719	372	105	

1. written or verbal; 2. shares owned mostly by operator and his/her family or by some other persons or business; 3. institutions, community pastures, land operated privately for an estate or trust, Hutterite colonies, co-operatives.

Sources: 1971-1991 - Statistics Canada 1992, 1991 Census of Canada, Census Overview of Canadian Agriculture, Catalogue 93-348, Table 4; 1996 - Statistics Canada 1997, 1996 Census of Canada, Agricultural Profile of Manitoba, Catalogue 95-178-XPB, Table 1.1.

and Basran 1988). In spite of this trend, the data I collected from the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board indicate that, of those commercial market gardeners supplying the board, just over half the farms (29 out of 51) remain family units while just under half (22 out of 51) are either partnerships or family companies. Family units are most common among potato producers while partnerships and family companies predominate among five of the six largest vegetable producers.

There are, of course, limitations on how large a farm can become. Besides climatic factors and soil quality, the amount of fixed capital invested is also crucial. The larger the acreage and the more mechanized the operation, the less flexibility a farmer has to downsize or diversify in bad years which may be one of the reasons that the six largest vegetable farms in Manitoba range in size from 100 to 800 acres, the average being approximately 360 acres. This is well below the 1996 average farm size of 784 acres in Table 4 and even the largest vegetable farm of 800 acres could reasonably fall within the middle size category in Table 5.

A second trend in the integration of farms into the capitalist economy is the increase in the value of agricultural products sold. Table 7 illustrates this trend. Since 1946, the percentage of Manitoba farms with sales below \$10,000 has decreased while the percentage of those with sales above \$10,000 has increased. In 1996, 78 percent of farms reported sales of \$10,000 or more as opposed to only 1 percent in 1946.

Table 7 Percentage of Farms Classified by Value (Current Dollar) of Agricultural Products Sold, Manitoba, 1946-1996											
\$ Value	1946	1951	1956	1961	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996
<2,500	67.6	50.1	n.a.	43.9	31.1	27.5	14.9	9.9	7.6	7.1	7.9
2,500- 9,999	29.8	46.4	n.a.	48.7	48.2	45.4	26.6	17.3	14.0	13.1	13.6
10,000- 49,000	1.0	3.6	n.a.	7.5	19.1	25.3	47.0	43.1	35.3	34.4	28.5
50,000- 99,999	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.6	1.7	8.5	18.8	21.6	20.8	17.0
100,000- 249,000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3.0	8.8	17.0	18.5	21.8
250,000- 499,999	n.a.	2.0	4.5	6.0	7.7						
500,000+	n.a.	3.4									

Sources: 1946 - Statistics Canada 1949, 1946 Census of Canada, Vol. IV, Agriculture (Manitoba), Table 35; 1951 - Statistics Canada 1953, 1951 Census of Canada, Vol. VI, Agriculture (Manitoba), Table 34; 1961-1966 - Statistics Canada 1973, 1971 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba, Catalogue 96-708, Table 3; 1971-1981 - Statistics Canada 1982, 1981 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba, Catalogue 96-908, Table 3; 1986 - Statistics Canada 1987, 1986 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba, Catalogue 96-109, Table 27; 1991 - Statistics Canada 1992, 1991 Census of Canada, Agriculture Manitoba (Pt. 2), Catalogue 95-364, Table 28; 1996 - Statistics Canada 1997, 1996 Census of Canada, Agricultural Profile of Manitoba, Catalogue 95-178-XPB, Table 28.1.

Ghorayshi (1990) assumes a direct correlation between value of agricultural products sold and farm size, that is, the greater the value, the larger the farm, and in most cases this is true. Table 8, for example, indicates that the value of horticultural crops such as potatoes and fresh-market vegetables, while suffering some downturns during the 1960s, is once again increasing.<sup>5</sup> According to Statistics Canada, data on processed and non-commercial vegetables were "unavailable" after 1980. Even so, the total value of fresh-market vegetables alone in 1986 was \$10,150,000. If, as Statistics Canada claims, 227 farms reported, this averages \$45,000 per farm. Of course, this is only an average. The very smallest farms will average much less while the very largest, much more. Yet one only needs to recall the effects of the wheat-subsidy war between the United States and the European Economic Community in 1993. As a result, Canadian wheat producers, many of whom farm thousands of acres, received Depression-level prices for their crops. It thus becomes obvious that virtually any farm, through forces beyond its control, can change from one sales class to another regardless of its size. One cannot always assume a direct correlation between value of agricultural products sold and farm size.

Nonetheless, if one considers the costs required to maintain a farm in Manitoba, one can see that the income of many farms would be inadequate (compare Tables 7 and 9). Table 9 indicates that total farm expenses

Table 8 Value of Selected Horticultural Crops, Manitoba, 1936-1991 Thousands of (Constant 1986) Dollars				
Year	Potatoes	Commercial Vegetables		Non-Commercial Vegetables
		Fresh Vegetables	Processing Vegetables	
1936	13,670	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1941	19,415	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1946	15,021	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1951	16,279	11,029	1,226	6,863
1956	12,209	14,444	4,444	7,778
1961	8,965	14,428	6,219	8,955
1966	17,658	5,255	1,590	8,993
1971	21,407	8,133	885	7,375
1976	26,504	5,739	752	5,639
1981	44,672	8,419	n.a.	n.a.
1986	33,577	10,150	n.a.	n.a.
1991	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Sources: 1936-1980 - *100 Years of Agriculture in Manitoba*; 1981-1989 - Manitoba Agriculture Yearbook (annual).

(the cost of production) have greatly increased from approximately \$8,600 per farm in 1946 to approximately \$70,000 in 1996. Machinery expenses, for example, rise and fall as farms continue to mechanize as far as possible, but machinery remains the second-highest source of expenditures next to crop expenditures. Like machinery expenses, crop expenses (seed, fertilizer, pesticide) are controlled by a few large corporations. Further, while expenditures on rent and taxes have been variable in their ascent, interest on debt climbed steadily until 1981. The only area over which farmers have some control is the cost of labour. This can be reduced through mechanization, as in the potato and sugar beet sectors, and/or by seeking out the cheapest sources of labour possible, as in the vegetable sector.<sup>6</sup>

How have these trends manifested themselves in market gardening? The years 1945 to 1960 were ones of expansion in the industry as some growers began to move their operations out of the Winnipeg area and into rural Manitoba. The move was encouraged by the Manitoba Department of Agriculture which, in an attempt to promote diversification in a predominantly wheat economy, slowly convinced farmers to experiment with special crops (sugar beets, sunflower, buckwheat, soybeans, rapeseed, and flaxseed) and field vegetables in the Pembina Pocket, a 600-square-mile area of sandy loam that extends from Haskett on the American border, north to Thornhill, east to Rosenfeld, and south to just west of Emerson (*Winnipeg Tribune* [hereafter WT] 1958: 5).

Initial results were overwhelmingly successful. In 1949, a farmer near Plum Coulee began to experiment with sugar beets. To these he added peas, sweet corn, cauliflower, beans, cucumbers and, later, strawberries, raspberries and tomatoes. By 1958, he was producing seventeen tons of

**Table 9**  
**Total Farm Expenses and Percentage Distribution of Expenses by Major Sources,**  
**Manitoba, 1946-1996**  
**Thousands of (Constant 1986) Dollars —**  
**Percentage of Total Farm Expenses Contributed By**

Year	Total <sup>1</sup>	Machinery	Crop Expenses	Livestock Expenses	Rent/Taxes	Interest on Debt	Wages	Other <sup>2</sup>
1946	466,929	154,550 (33.1%)	17,543 (9.8%)	60,557 (13.0%)	107,421 (23.0%)	20,050 (4.3%)	76,371 (16.4%)	30,456 (6.5%)
1951	462,990	177,299 (38.3%)	24,549 (5.3%)	45,103 (9.7%)	90,706 (19.6%)	25,480 (5.5%)	58,528 (12.6%)	41,525 (9.0%)
1956	443,680	183,004 (41.2%)	26,004 (5.9%)	39,658 (8.9%)	74,484 (16.8%)	28,498 (6.4%)	49,147 (11.1%)	42,884 (9.7%)
1961	592,876	228,995 (38.6%)	52,030 (8.8%)	56,279 (9.5%)	93,940 (15.8%)	43,945 (7.4%)	62,542 (10.5%)	55,144 (9.3%)
1966	631,022	185,435 (29.4%)	93,701 (14.8%)	72,579 (11.5%)	85,716 (13.6%)	64,561 (10.2%)	51,586 (8.2%)	77,442 (12.3%)
1971	640,596	179,791 (28.1%)	91,643 (14.3%)	95,445 (14.9%)	65,345 (10.2%)	65,708 (10.3%)	47,870 (7.5%)	94,794 (14.8%)
1976	1,004,141	219,891 (21.9%)	221,184 (22.0%)	162,774 (16.2%)	102,209 (10.2%)	108,524 (10.8%)	52,959 (5.3%)	136,600 (13.6%)
1981	1,519,044	307,487 (20.2%)	380,609 (25.1%)	183,826 (12.1%)	142,163 (9.4%)	260,299 (17.1%)	78,091 (5.1%)	166,569 (11.0%)
1986	1,402,673	273,253 (19.5%)	394,490 (28.1%)	178,917 (12.8%)	136,880 (9.8%)	160,371 (11.4%)	100,691 (7.2%)	158,068 (11.3%)
1991	1,255,380	253,702 (20.2%)	315,348 (25.1%)	143,115 (11.4%)	113,845 (9.1%)	124,916 (10.0%)	106,269 (8.5%)	198,185 (15.8%)
1996	1,717,378	288,555 (16.8%)	520,799 (30.3%)	268,784 (15.7%)	155,630 (9.1%)	118,595 (6.9%)	138,133 (8.0%)	200,676 (11.7%)

1. Not including depreciation on buildings and machinery; 2. includes utilities, repairs, insurance, premiums, etc.

Source: Statistics Canada, Agriculture Economic Statistics, Catalogue 21-603E.

carrots on an acre and a quarter and, the following year, planned to try muskmelons, onions, potatoes, lettuce and cabbage. In the same year, a Winkler-area farmer found a ready market for fifty acres of onions at ten tons to the acre. At the time, provincial agricultural experts were convinced that the Pembina Pocket had the potential to supply at least ten canneries with fresh produce.

But this initial success did not come without certain financial risks. A grower could not go into field vegetables on a small scale. The grower required a large acreage on which to at least partially mechanize, as well as costly storage facilities for his/her crops. Equally costly irrigation systems had to be installed. Labour was cheap in rural Manitoba but, because of the labour-intensive nature of the industry, a grower now needed more labour than before. Because of the risks involved, Manitoba Department of Agriculture officials had to admit in 1960 that the province's "total acreage of vegetables ... has remained static for 20 years" (*Manitoba Co-operator* [hereafter MC] 1960: 11). Potato production also stalled. By 1968, the province was producing only a fraction of its potential. As with vegetables, part of the problem was the high start-up costs of specialized production.

Potential growers were warned that "it is unrealistic to think of [potatoes] as a short term substitute for other enterprises" (Stone 1969: 29) such as cereal grains or special crops. Another part of the problem was the lack of markets. The Manitoba Department of Agriculture was fully aware of this when it concluded that:

Increased production will take place only as additional market outlets for this production, be it fresh or processed, are developed (Stone 1968: 47).

Nonetheless, certain growers persevered. One third-generation producer moved his operation from Winnipeg, where he grew bedding plants and vegetables, to Portage la Prairie in 1960. His remains a family company. He is the manager, his wife is the bookkeeper and accountant, and their three sons are partners in the business. In Portage, he began with 120 acres, 30 of which were in rutabagas. By 1978, he had 400 acres, 275 of which were in beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, lettuce, onions, green peppers, squash and tomatoes. At the time, the gross value of his crops was \$500,000 but his wage costs had risen from \$130,000 in 1974, to \$150,000 in 1975, to \$200,000 in 1978 (Hunter 1975: 5; Smith 1978: 28b). By 1989, he owned 450 acres and had narrowed his production to broccoli, carrots, asparagus, and green, cooking and pickling onions. Although he hired 25 to 30 full-time and 130 seasonal workers that year and by 1993 had a payroll of \$1.5 million, he also invested heavily in machinery and a refrigerated warehouse (Geary 1989: 13; White 1993b: 9).

In 1992, a study commissioned by Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) painted a mixed picture of the country's horticultural industry. It stated that, although the potato sector had been highly mechanized for several decades, many of its production methods were not as much new as they were bigger, more efficient and, above all, more expensive. It also concluded that, while vegetable producers had not been slow to improve quality and quantity, their ability to advance technologically had been limited due to the perishable nature of their crops.

As if to counteract this image, the Vegetable Growers Association of Manitoba announced plans to host a tour of three major vegetable farms. In August 1993, scientists, politicians, and the media were invited to view the most recent technological advances in the industry (White 1993a: 5, 1993b: 8, 9). Greenhouses had been expanded to replace American transplants of unreliable quality and quantity. Lateral-move irrigation systems, which move on a timer system from field to field, used lower volumes of water. Pest management programs monitored levels of insect infestation. Only when the number of insects reached levels that could damage the crops were the fields sprayed, not only saving on the cost of pesticides but also making the operation more environmentally friendly. Advanced grading and packing systems measured, for example, the length and diameter of carrots and bagged them accordingly. The carrots were kept fresh and

sweet in hangars which regulated temperature and humidity in closed systems of high carbon dioxide air flow.

Both the EIC report and growers agreed on one thing, however — the marketing strategy for vegetables was one of the weakest links in the chain.

### **Marketing Strategies**

#### *Marketing Cooperatives*

If prairie farmers spoke with one voice on some issues, they certainly did not on others. Among market gardeners, nowhere was this more evident than in the sphere of marketing.

Their problem actually began at the point of production. Not only did insects and plant diseases pose major problems in the early years of market gardening, but few growers concerned themselves with quality in the grading and packaging of their crops. The resulting inferior produce was what then appeared in the marketplace. Local wholesalers, retailers and consumers alike rejected what they considered to be typical of Manitoba produce and insisted instead on produce imported from the United States. A lesson in quality might have been learned from this were it not for the more unscrupulous buyers who, by taking advantage of this disorganization, forced farmers into fierce competition with one another for a share of the local market at depressed prices.

In response to a disorganized market, several growers' groups established themselves in Winnipeg in the Northend Farmers Market off Main Street in the early 1930s. The Manitoba Vegetable and Potato Growers Co-operative, whose members were largely from the Bird's Hill area, served both the wholesale and retail trade while the Manitoba Truck Farmers Co-operative, whose members came mainly from Winnipeg proper, served the wholesale trade. A third marketing pool, Manitoba Associated Growers, eventually joined with the Truck Farmers Co-operative to form Winnipeg Gardeners Co-operative Limited in 1947. The first order of business, that of promotion, was to adopt the "Peak of the Market" logo which is still in use today. The second was to establish four basic principles which are worth quoting here since they illustrate both the strengths and weaknesses of this and future co-operative endeavours of market gardeners:

1. Produce sold by the shareholder is sold on a commission basis. Pooling of sales is done over varying periods to determine the selling price. From this price, the handling charges, set and approved by the directors, are deducted and the net price is paid to the shareholders.
2. The grower's entire crop must be delivered to and sold through the organization.
3. A quota system assures each shareholder of his portion of the sales of the firm.
4. Each grower must guarantee his produce and absorb any claims made upon the company in respect to his product (Peters 1988: 276).

The Winnipeg Gardeners Co-operative and the Manitoba Vegetable and Potato Growers Co-operative competed with one another for markets

until 1956 when they, too, merged to form Gardeners Sales Limited composed mainly of Winnipeg growers. As its membership grew to include other Manitoba growers, Gardeners Sales expanded into a new state-of-the-art building on King Edward Street<sup>7</sup> with facilities for washing, grading, hydro-cooling, and controlled-temperature storage. Soon Gardeners Sales controlled approximately 65 percent of total potato and 80 percent of total vegetable production in the province (Peters 1988: 277). It also became a major supplier of agricultural equipment, chemicals and registered seed.

Once quality could be assured, Gardeners Sales turned its attention to promoting its product. The "Peak of the Market" logo, transferred to it from the Winnipeg Gardeners Co-operative, appeared on billboards across the prairie provinces. More important was the establishment in 1956 of a fact-finding committee composed of market gardeners and representatives of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture to inform buyers of the seasonal availability of Manitoba produce and thus minimize competition from American growers.<sup>8</sup> In this way, Gardeners Sales held something of an umbrella over the industry for years, diminished only by the fact that, being a co-operative, it could not gain 100 percent control over its supply. Although it had adopted the original principles of the Winnipeg Gardeners Co-operative, it could not eliminate competition from some farmers who continued to produce and market as they saw fit.

#### *The Vegetable Growers Association of Manitoba*

While cooperatives were busy struggling for efficiency in marketing, the Manitoba Department of Agriculture granted a charter in 1953 to another group, the Vegetable Growers Association of Manitoba (VGAM), which was to assist in the areas of production and promotion. The association, headed by an elected board of directors, consisted of a Potato and a Market Vegetable Section, three standing committees (Projects, Research, and Resolutions), and a special Tariff Committee. The VGAM gave exclusive voice to all market gardeners, who then worked in conjunction with the federal and provincial governments, research stations, wholesalers and retailers, and consumer groups in order to advance the industry in Manitoba.

Government involvement in the VGAM was evident from the outset since the idea for its formation originated in the Manitoba Agricultural College, one of the provincial Department of Agriculture's research stations. In order for its extension services to be effective it had to reach all growers; hence, an organized group of participants proved ideal. The Department of Agriculture still provides the VGAM with secretarial services as well as paying the costs of publishing and mailing convention programs.

At the association's first convention (in the same year as its formation), the Deputy Minister of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture set out what he considered should be the VGAM's main objectives and the means by which to attain them. These included the testing of selected plant varieties

and the provision of educational services to farmers in the areas of land use and chemical application; efficient and quality production through planning and adherence to strict grading standards; and enhanced public relations through advertising and honest merchandizing (Peters 1988: 282). In the same year, the VGAM was assigned a potato specialist and, in 1956, a vegetable specialist.

One has only to review the wide variety of topics covered at VGAM conventions over the years to appreciate the scope of its efforts. They range from organic farming to irrigation practices to health and safety issues. The VGAM's promotional efforts have also been outstanding. Like the agricultural societies before it, the VGAM encouraged industry-wide competitions for quality produce with media coverage of these and other public events. It provided tours of farms in order to convince processing firms to establish themselves in south-central Manitoba. It also gained a seat on the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC), an influential lobbying group established in 1922. One of the goals of the CHC is to advance vegetable and potato production on a national scale. To do so requires an understanding of the industry's place in the Canadian economy and, hence, representation not only by producers but by agricultural specialists, wholesalers, and processors.

Many of the CHC's concerns centre around strengthening the position of farmers in the Canadian economy:

We hold the unequivocal view that if Canada is to advance beyond economic colonialism and a dependence on exports of basic raw resources, it must be a primary market for its own produce at reasonably compensatory returns to its producers, and that it must recognize the right to such reasonable returns for agriculture, just as it already recognizes such rights for labour, manufacturing and commerce (Peters 1988: 367).

Farmers, however, are at as distinct a disadvantage in the sphere of marketing as they are in that of production. Powerful interest groups such as wholesalers, retailers, and processors are more likely than producers to determine farm gate prices due to the fact that both sellers and buyers operate within a system of imperfect competition. That is, there exist many (often individual) sellers but only a few or even just one buyer who has the power to force lower prices onto sellers. This power differential seems to elude the CHC.

In response to the organization of market gardeners under Gardeners Sales in the 1950s, certain buyers formed their own lobbying group in 1960 — the Manitoba Fruit and Vegetable Wholesalers Association. As with any association interested in promoting the industry as a whole, its objectives include fostering closer cooperation between its members and between members and farmers, and supporting "desirable" and opposing "undesirable" legislation while at the same time encouraging competition on a "fair and ethical plane" (Peters 1988: 342). The implication for farm gate prices of these last two objectives becomes clearer when one realizes who some of

the members of this association are — Chiquita Brands Limited, Del Monte Banana Company, Sunkist Growers, Scott National Limited — all powerful corporations whose advantage lies in operating on economies of scale. The end result is that

Because consumers do not want higher food prices but labour costs in food marketing are continually rising, processors and retailers keep constant downward pressure on farm product prices (Hiscocks 1972: 21).

In spite of the advances made by the VGAM, two areas were beyond its control. The first was marketing. Although the VGAM has worked closely over the years with the Manitoba Fruit and Vegetable Wholesalers Association, growers are still forced to sell their produce at prices below the cost of production. The second was keeping small farmers in business. This may have been inevitable given the fact that the VGAM has always represented medium producers against whom small producers cannot compete.

#### *The Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board*

Why did marketing cooperatives prove so unsuccessful as to warrant a government-regulated marketing board? To answer this question, one must first examine the two main functions of a marketing cooperative — to increase marketing efficiency and to act as a bargaining agent.

Marketing efficiency can be increased through various means such as ensuring a quality product, reducing overall handling costs, and regulating the flow of produce to maximize returns to individual producers. These were the original intentions behind the principles laid down by the Winnipeg Gardeners Co-operative in 1947. Ideally, adherence to such principles should cause markets for the product to expand and, ultimately, increase and even stabilize farm income by spreading the burdens and benefits equally among its members. But efficient marketing depends upon success in the bargaining arena and it is here that marketing cooperatives have fallen short. Brownstone (1961: 326) suggests that these shortcomings cannot be attributed to the cooperative endeavour *per se*:

Rather it lies in the nature of the industry itself with its many unspecialized, limited-output producers who have neither the economic or social incentives nor the discipline to organize voluntarily and remain organized.

Because membership is voluntary, the cooperative may not be able to garner enough support to command a consistent supply of the product, resulting in a loss of control over its marketing objectives.

As the experience of Okanagan Valley fruit growers in the 1920s illustrates, the problem is not uncommon. Their first attempts at voluntary co-operative marketing faltered when the industry began to expand. Markets for the surplus product became hard to find and as prices began to fall an increasing number of members tried to sell independently, leading to competition between them and to even lower prices. The cooperative was

subsequently reorganized on a contract basis in an effort to secure greater control over the product. But once supply had been seasonally regulated, non-members took advantage of the higher prices and dumped all of their produce onto the market. Members followed suit to the point where it became obvious that "the growers who stood to gain most from the activities of the cooperative were those who didn't join" (Drummond 1965: 247). If a cooperative does not have total control over its product, its role as a bargaining agent and its success in marketing diminishes. The board of the early Winnipeg Gardeners Co-operative anticipated these very problems from the outset:

There was always the great temptation for members to sell on the open market for a few cents higher price when it suited them and then to run to the pool when things got tough, or prices began to fall (Gardeners Sales n.d.: 14).

A marketing board, as opposed to a marketing cooperative, is "a compulsory, horizontal marketing organization for primary and processed natural products operating under authority delegated by the government" (Hiscocks 1972: 20). The term "compulsory" means that all farms producing a given commodity in a designated region are legally obligated to adhere to the regulations of a marketing plan. In Manitoba, any grower with four or more acres of potatoes or half an acre or more of root crops such as carrots, onions, turnips, parsnips, and rutabagas must sell through the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board. Summer crops such as lettuce, cabbage, celery, tomatoes, corn and broccoli are exempt because of their perishable nature. The term "horizontal" means that the board controls and pools the output of all member farms.

All marketing boards have three main objectives — to maintain or increase incomes of the producers of a particular commodity through price negotiation; to stabilize their income from the sale of the product by controlling supply; and to equalize market opportunities and returns among producers (Hiscocks 1972: 21). These objectives are virtually identical to those of marketing cooperatives with one exception: "government authority through legislation" ensures compulsory, not just voluntary, participation in the marketing board.

Established in 1972, the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board consists of a manager and staff and nine elected members, six of whom represent potato and three, vegetable, growers. Neither the provincial nor the federal government has any significant involvement other than supervisory in the board. Its mandate is "to maintain a fair product price for the grower and to facilitate orderly product marketing with a consistent supply of uniformly high quality product" (Peters 1988: 289-90). Its powers as a negotiating committee are minimal as compared, for example, to those of the Ontario Asparagus Growers Marketing Board, a negotiating agency, or the British Columbia Coast Vegetable Marketing Board, a central selling agency (see Table 10). Of the thirteen possible powers and procedures allotted to marketing boards, the following characterize the

**Table 10**  
**Powers and Procedures of Selected Marketing Boards**

	Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board	Ontario Asparagus Growers' Marketing Board	British Columbia Coast Vegetable Marketing Board
<b>Pooling</b>	yes	yes	yes
<b>Establish customer and wholesale price</b>	no	no	wholesale and consumer
<b>Establish producer price</b>	minimum and maximum	minimum	minimum and maximum
<b>Type of pricing</b>	negotiation	negotiation	fixed
<b>Quotas</b>	marketing	marketing	marketing
<b>Licensing</b>	yes	yes	yes
<b>Seizure and disposal</b>	no	no	yes
<b>Control of interprovincial and export trade</b>	no	yes	yes
<b>Purchase and sell</b>	yes	yes	no
<b>Market information</b>	no	no	no
<b>Market development (domestic)</b>	no	no	no
<b>Market development (export)</b>	no	no	no
<b>Promotion</b>	yes	no	yes

Source: G.A. Hiscocks and T.A. Bennett (1981: 276-77).

**Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board (Hiscocks and Bennett 1981: 272-73):**

1. The board *pools* all proceeds from sales so that each producer receives the same average price after adjustments for grade, etc.
2. The board sets minimum and maximum producer *prices*.
3. Price is determined through *negotiation* with buyers.
4. The board sets *marketing* but not production *quotas* for every producer. Over-quotas are charged a freight equalization levy.
5. The board requires *licensing* of any persons involved in any way with the marketing process.
6. The board both *purchases* and *sells* the regulated products.
7. It also *promotes* the regulated products.

It is worth looking briefly at the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board's procedure for determining prices for herein lies an understanding of its rather limited powers. Prices are determined through negotiation, usually with wholesalers (not, however, with processors since this falls under federal, not provincial, jurisdiction), and are subject to certain limitations. If the board competes with similar boards from other provinces, negotiations in Manitoba are postponed until prices are set in, for example, British Columbia or Ontario. While the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board could apply for federal rather than provincial legislation to strengthen its interprovincial powers, it is unlikely that either

British Columbia or Ontario would willingly give up the provincial protection that each presently enjoys. Even if they did, if buyers were to consider the prices too high, they may choose to purchase less or to seek sources of supply which are not subject to marketing board legislation. In either case, producers are at a disadvantage since the demand for most vegetables is fairly price-inelastic, that is, if the price of one item is too high, the consumer will substitute another item for it.

Even the limited powers now held by the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board were not won easily. As early as 1942, the Manitoba Vegetable and Potato Growers Co-operative had petitioned the Manitoba Marketing Board for compulsory control, but the proposal had to be voted on by all growers who would be affected by it. The proposal was vetoed in 1958 and again in 1962 amid allegations by small producers of infringement on their individual rights. Small farmers feared that they would either be forced to sell all of their produce to the marketing board at set prices, or else face fines or imprisonment.

It was not until 1964 that the VGAM was allowed to incorporate Gardeners Sales into the government-controlled Manitoba Potato Marketing Commission as part of a pilot project. Its apparent success led to the formation of the Manitoba Vegetable Marketing Commission in 1965 but not without opposition. Both the Liberals and the New Democrats accused the Conservatives of carrying out a provincial power-grab and argued that control should remain in the hands of producers. A government-controlled commission showed that the Conservatives neither trusted growers nor thought them capable of running their own affairs.

The strongest criticism came from the Manitoba Vegetable Processors Association which argued that government-controlled marketing boards put its members at a distinct disadvantage by interfering with free market forces. Processors would be compelled to buy vegetables at fixed prices, would not be able to grow their own produce, and would not be allowed to enter into free contracts with individual producers. The association successfully lobbied for permissive marketing so that its members could buy from any source.

In 1966, some growers, having formed the United Vegetable Producers of Manitoba (UVP), staged a province-wide protest against compulsory marketing. The president of the UVP alleged that a small group of growers was trying to control vegetable production in the province and that 252 small and part-time producers would be forced out of business due to excessive costs (*MC* 1966a: 2). A few large growers who sold exclusively on the open market also joined the protest. Under such pressure, the minister of Agriculture was obligated to investigate the marketing commission. After hearing the UVP's concerns about lack of representation, excessive costs, and insufficient quotas (*MC* 1966b: 1, 1966c: 1), the minister decided in 1967 that the Vegetable Marketing Commission would be allowed to operate on a voluntary basis only. Now it was the VGAM's turn to stage a protest of growers and machines in front of the Manitoba legislature.

The VGAM, some 150 members strong, continued to pressure the government for a producers' marketing board until, in 1972, both the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board and the Manitoba Root Crop Producers Marketing Board were created. The two amalgamated in 1982. The VGAM, composed mainly of medium farmers, had finally achieved some protection against the boom-and-bust cycle which they had been demanding for years — a producers' marketing board.

#### **Contracts With Food Processors**

Gathering information on potato and vegetable processors is a difficult task due to the fact that, as private companies, they are not obligated to open their books to the public. Certain generalizations about the industry can be made, however, despite variations in the type of food processed. The implications of these generalizations for the future of commercial market gardening in Manitoba are addressed in Chapter 4.

Small Canadian-owned processing plants have long played an important part in Manitoba's history. The David J. Dyson pickling company operated from 1887 until it was sold in 1921 to Western Vinegar, which eventually closed. The Kildonan Canning Company operated from 1925 until 1950 when it was destroyed by fire. Canada Packers opened a pickling company in 1950. In Morden, Canadian Canners began processing peas, corn, beans, and beets in 1952; in 1972, it became Morden Fine Foods and, in 1978, Best Pack of Farm King, which finally closed in 1982. In Winkler, Gardenland Canners operated until 1972.

The trend across Canada, however, has been away from small Canadian-owned firms and toward mainly American-owned ones. The major players in potato and vegetable processing in Manitoba are American-owned Carnation Company established in 1962, Canadian-owned McCain Foods established in 1979 and, until recently, American-owned Campbell Soup Company established in 1960. One drawback to this trend is that foreign-owned as opposed to Canadian-owned branch plants may not be supplied with the latest technology nor be allowed to export to any country in which the parent company is either located or has another branch plant (Warnock 1978). Branch plant shutdowns, especially in times of economic crisis, are thus not uncommon.

The most studied case of food processors in Canada is that of McCain Foods, the origins of which date back to the early 1900s in New Brunswick, and whose scale of operation rivals that of its foreign-owned competitors. The level of *vertical integration* that McCain has achieved, from machinery and fertilizer production, to land ownership, to processing and finished-product transport, has assured it of success. This success has led to increased *horizontal integration* as well, with plants in Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Alberta, the United States, and abroad (Martens 1977; Warnock 1978).

The actual amount of land that McCain owns is unknown, one reason being that

**Any farmer in severe debt to the company can be forced to sell out to the company, or if he wishes to save face, can become a manager employed for a wage on land which used to be his (his neighbours remaining under the illusion that all is well)**  
(Martens 1977:18-19).

Estimates range from 3,000 to 11,000 acres in New Brunswick alone (Martens 1977: 6; Warnock 1978: 112). Direct corporate involvement in farming, however, is on the decline in North America because it was found to be unprofitable, something that, as Warnock (1978) points out, farmers knew all along. Campbell's, for example, used to own experimental tomato farms outside of Portage la Prairie until the company decided to channel the funds into the University of Manitoba's agricultural research stations instead.

Rather than produce their own crops, companies such as McCain, Carnation, and Campbell's have chosen the more lucrative alternative of entering into contractual arrangements with farmers. In this way, the processor is assured a high-quality product but is absolved from the natural risks of weather, plant disease and soil depletion, and from the need to finance the capital costs of starting up new farms and supervising labour (Clement 1983). To food processors, land ownership is primarily a speculative venture. Any direct involvement in production simply serves as a lever of control over the price of produce (Warnock 1978).

The most contentious issue is the contracts themselves. The terms of a contract generally favour the processor, who is not legally bound to take the contracted produce on time or at all. The farmer, however, is legally bound to deliver on demand. In the case of McCain and Carnation, which supply farmers with inputs (machinery and fertilizer) in exchange for produce (potatoes), deliveries may be forestalled so that the interest on inputs compounds over the winter (Martens 1977). Such was not the case with Campbell's, which did not supply its contractees with inputs. Although Martens (1977) claims that the contracts offered by both McCain and Carnation are identical, I was told that farmers prefer dealing with Carnation because it alone is willing to negotiate prices with farmers as a group rather than as individuals. Campbell's, like McCain, negotiated with individuals only, thus precluding the advantages of collective bargaining.

The grading of produce, another problem area, is often an arbitrary process with cuts from shipments at the discretion of company inspectors and dependent upon the percentage of the volume recovered after processing earlier shipments. Martens (1977: 23) cites the example of one farmer who tried to deliver the same load of potatoes twice in one day. The first time, the inspector calculated a 54 percent cut which the farmer refused to accept. The second time, the inspector calculated a 20 percent cut for the same potatoes which the farmer then unloaded immediately. Not all processors are so arbitrary in their grading. Campbell's, for example, is said to have been far more consistent.

The import of produce is a third major concern, especially since over

80 percent of all potatoes in Manitoba are contracted to processors (not so with vegetables which are primarily destined for the fresh market). As a rule, Carnation, McCain, and Campbell's alike import produce from other provinces or from the United States when there are local shortages. The danger, however, lies in the right of processors to import for reasons other than local shortages, such as having to pay more expensive local prices.

Growers do not enter into contracts blindly. The advantages and disadvantages are discussed at length in farm newspapers and at producers' meetings. A year after Campbell's opened, for example, the VGAM invited the Head of the University of Manitoba's Agricultural Economics and Farm Management Department to its annual convention to speak to the issue. Delegates to the convention were told that the advantages of contracts are several. They provide credit to expand and modernize the farm and they offer guaranteed prices and assured markets for produce. But, delegates were warned, buyers are experienced in drafting contracts in their favour and may take advantage of the grower (MC 1961: 12).

Despite these problems, one potato farmer assured me that processors in Manitoba are not as "ruthless" as those out east. An occasional unfulfilled contract due, for example, to an "act of God" (natural disaster) is not penalized. Only when this becomes a regular occurrence will processors either buy the shortfall on the open market and charge the farmer the difference or else terminate the contract entirely. Another told me that, while farmers would prefer to be free from contracts, they do offer a relatively stable income in exchange for high-quality produce. That which does not meet the exact specifications of the processor is often sold, with assistance from the marketing board, on the fresh market. Their optimism is belied, however, by the opinions of other growers. Very few risk contracting all of their crops to a processor; a certain amount will always be destined for the fresh market. In fact, one producer warned others of the dangers of contracting their crops to Campbell's in the event of a shutdown. He never entered into a contract with the company, preferring instead to sell entirely on the fresh market.

But growers' problems keep mounting. Despite generous tax concessions on land and water, and a public investment of \$983,000 for new sewage-disposal facilities in Portage la Prairie (Werier 1968: 6), Campbell's closed its doors in 1989. Both McCain and Carnation had been pressuring potato farmers in southwestern Manitoba to either install irrigation systems at their own expense of more than \$650 an acre or else have their contracts terminated. The installation of these systems depended upon the proposed diversion of the Assiniboine River south from Portage la Prairie, a highly contentious project touted as one in which the supposed "burgeoning" populations of Carman, Morden, Winkler, and Altona would enjoy an increased water supply. Seldom mentioned in this ongoing debate were the names of McCain and Carnation, two major backers of the project which was opposed by a coalition of fifty-two community organizations, environmental groups

and Indian bands, all of whom draw their drinking water from the area that would have been depleted. Caught in the middle were those potato producers who contract most, if not all, of their crops to McCain or Carnation. Because of such strong opposition to the project, attention shifted from the Assiniboine to the Red River before the whole issue was temporarily shelved.

#### Notes

1. Their historical importance was captured succinctly by Morton (1985: 28): "The successor to prairie grass and buffalo was wheat and beef."
2. Each province typically produces milk, poultry, and eggs in quantities sufficient to meet the demands of its own population.
3. While the term "modernization" in the context of agriculture typically refers to an increase in technological complexity, implicit in it is the assumption that, before such change can occur, farmers' cultural values must change to embrace a belief in "progress," "entrepreneurship," and "risk-taking." Although modernization theory is associated with the work of the economist Rostow (1960), it has its counterpart in that of the anthropologist Lewis (1966).
4. Note that Statistics Canada changed the acreage categories in 1971 to accommodate the increase in farm size.
5. Sudden drops in value are usually attributable to inclement weather.
6. Ironically, it is the increase in constant capital (mechanization) that causes profits to fall since surplus value is created by variable capital (labour power) (Marx 1848).
7. This is the present location of the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board.
8. This fact-finding function would be taken over by the Vegetable Marketing Commission in 1966.

## — Chapter 3 —

# FARM LABOUR

If, as Cherwinski (1988: 128) suggests, the experience of hired hands is "shrouded in silence," it could not hold truer than for those farm workers of minority extraction. Aboriginal Canadians, Mexican Mennonites, Mexicans — none have written of their experiences, positive or negative, as farm labourers. Only the Japanese have recorded their experiences in oral histories and autobiographies.

Farm workers in general are one of the weakest fractions of the working class. If some have had the power to "display agency" by forging a "culture of resistance" to the capital-labour relationship as it developed in prairie agriculture (Danysk 1995), others have not, or at least not to the same extent. The focus of this chapter is those racialized class fractions who have had little say, economically or politically, in occupying the role of farm labourers. The degradation of Canada's aboriginal peoples, the forced labour of the Japanese, the poverty of the Mexican Mennonites, and the guest-worker status of Mexican migrants all attest to the accumulation function of the state in the interests of Manitoba agriculture.

### Early Sources

One of the earliest sources of labour that farmers in south-central Manitoba depended upon, apart from that of their own families, was that of the Ojibwa from Sandy Bay, Long Plain, Indian Gardens (and its sister reserve at Swan Lake) and Roseau River, and of the Dakota (the Portage la Prairie Sioux, later the Dakota Tipi and the Long Plain Sioux) (see Figure 3). This source of labour was not planned. Most bands, aware that a scarcity of game would eventually force them to pursue other means of subsistence, enthusiastically took up farming after 1870. The transformation of these primarily hunting and gathering peoples into farmers, however, often met with failure not because of their "wandering nature" but because of a lack of commitment on the part of the Dominion Government to its policy of reserve agriculture (Carter 1990).

Certain bands engaged in cultivation even before this time. The Ojibwa at Indian Gardens along the Assiniboine grew corn and potatoes; those at Roseau River also had large gardens. The Indian Gardens band and the Swan Lake band, once it finally settled around 1895, showed great interest



Figure 3. Indian Reserves in South Central Manitoba (Source: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1978). Cartography by P. Chapin, Thunder Bay.

in pursuing agriculture, located as they were on fairly fertile lands where cereal and root crops seemed to do well. The Long Plain band continued to hunt until around 1884, after which it attempted to cultivate its land but the soil was very sandy. The Roseau Reserve, although apparently well-suited for agriculture, was so near the white settlements of Emerson, Dominion City, and Letellier that the Indians there succumbed to the influence of alcohol far sooner than any others. By 1886, they were neglecting their crops in favour of gathering seneca root (Ogletree, 29 October 1886, CSP

1888, No. 15: 48) and, by 1888, were being offered high wages to help in the harvest off-reserve (Ogletree, 21 August 1888, CSP 1889, No. 16: 44), both of which were far more lucrative than farming. In fact, the market for seneca was so lucrative that, by 1895, Indian Agent Ogletree (5 August 1895, CSP 1896, No. 14: 59) was compelled to write that:

At the time I was making the payments these Indians had sold to three dealers in snake root (seneca) eleven thousand pounds which averaged them seventeen ... cents per pound and the snake root season was not half over.

Two bands that did not farm were the Ojibwa at Sandy Bay on the southwest shore of Lake Manitoba and the Dakota Tipi near Portage la Prairie. The Sandy Bay reserve was one of the few under study whose land was unsuitable for agriculture. The band managed, however, to raise cattle successfully and to make a good enough living from harvesting natural resources and working on grain fields in southern Manitoba. By 1900, Indian Agent Swinford (12 October 1900, CSP 1901, No. 27: 89) was able to report: "They are always well dressed and fat, which is the best proof that their resources and occupations are manifold and profitable." The Portage la Prairie Sioux, originally a small group of twenty-three families, settled on the outskirts of Portage la Prairie around 1886. Refugees of the Minnesota Uprising of 1863-64, they escaped the attention of Indian Affairs for years and, never having been given a reserve, supported themselves as casual workers in Portage or as farmhands in its vicinity where their labour was much sought after and well remunerated for the time (Elias 1988; Howard 1984).

Despite most bands' willingness to farm, the government was often slow to provide assistance beyond what was stipulated in Treaties 1 and 2, namely, one plough and harrow per family and one ox per band. In 1880, Indian Agent Ogletree (NA, RG 10, Black, v. 3721, file 23715) reported:

I have been urging on the members of the several bands [in the Portage la Prairie Agency] to break more land but invariably the reply is the Government will not supply us with the oxen.

What supplies the bands did receive were often inferior:

They have been furnished — by no fault of the Government which paid the price of prime supplies and implements — with inferior and old worn out cattle, or cattle too wild for working or dairy purposes, and with supplies of all kinds of the most inferior quality, which would not be accepted at any price by the ordinary consumer (McColl, 31 December 1878, CSP 1879, No. 7: 55).

Regardless of these setbacks, Indian agriculture did advance throughout the 1880s — so much so that white settlers began to complain about unfair competition from Indian farmers. Preoccupied with the successful settlement of the West, the government turned its attention away from the promotion of Indian agriculture and toward the dismantling of the reserve system. In the late 1800s, for example, the government began to enforce a

policy of peasant farming among Indians, thereby restricting their land base, their access to labour-saving technology and, ultimately, their ability to compete with white farmers.

The Indians at Long Plain were the most noticeably affected by the peasant farming policy. In 1893, Indian Agent Ogletree (22 August 1893, CSP 1894, No. 14: 44) expressed concern that

the last year the four or five that put in the crop had a very small return for their labour and could not get it threshed, as it would cost more to get a thresher to go up there than the whole crop would come to... They threshed some of it with the flail... They say that they will not farm any more wheat unless that they can get it threshed.

So discouraged had the band become that its best workers had deserted the reserve entirely.

The government's peasant farming policy had the desired effect. By 1900, agriculture no longer formed the basis of reserve economies.

From here, it was only one small step to conclude that, since extensive tracts of reserve land were simply lying idle, they should be thrown open to white settlement. "Proof" of the Indians' incorrigible nature could be found in the example of the Long Plain band which, by 1891, was "given more to roaming about than formerly" (Ogletree, 22 August 1891, CSP 1892, No. 14: 45). In fact, by 1900, "many of the Indians [in the Portage la Prairie Agency worked] as labourers for the settlers" rather than farm their own lands (Swinford, 12 October 1900, CSP 1901, No. 27: 85). Several years later, the Inspector of Indian Agencies reported:

The lands of all the bands of the [Portage la Prairie] agency are now valuable, and for all the farming they are doing, or are likely to do, they would be as well on one reserve ... as they would be under closer supervision and much better attention could be given them in every respect (Marlatt, 30 June 1906, CSP 1906-1907, No. 27: 105).

In the following year, Marlatt (27 May 1907, CSP 1907-1908, No. 27: 102) recommended with regard to the relatively well-off bands of the Manitowah Agency, such as Sandy Bay, that

the Indian (if he is not to become extinct), should be removed from the settled portions of our country and placed on reservations remote from our civilization. Here he can follow his natural mode of life and be subject to the best influences of our Christianity and education, without coming in constant contact with that which is worst in us to follow.

Incidentally, he adds: "The country surrounding Lake Winnipegosis, and on the lower reaches of the Saskatchewan, is ideal for Indian life, while it is of little value for colonization."

The most "valuable" lands were, of course, the most fertile, such as those at Swan Lake and Roseau River. In 1896, the land base at Swan Lake

totalled 11,803 acres. By 1903, it had been reduced to 9,634 acres and, by 1910, to 6,754 acres. In 1896, the Roseau Reserve had 13,544 acres. By 1903, it had only 5,670 acres. "Since they surrendered and sold part of their reserve," commented Inspector of Indian Agencies Jackson (31 March 1908, CSP 1909, No. 27: 108-09) of the members of Roseau River, "these Indians appear to have become more shiftless than before." Even the Portage la Prairie Sioux, whose "model Indian Community" was praised in 1900, were by 1911 "fast becoming a general nuisance" whose relocation was recommended by Indian Agent Logan (15 March 1911, CSP 1912, No. 27: 106).

Given the lack of commitment on the part of the government to provide for their subsistence through agriculture, aboriginal peoples had little choice but to combine subsistence or petty commodity production with seasonal farm labour in order to survive. For decades, they were the backbone of Manitoba agriculture in the form of a floating surplus population.

#### **Wartime Labour**

At no time were labour shortages in agriculture more acute than during Canada's participation in World Wars I and II. These absolute labour shortages necessitated the suspension of normal labour market relations in order to mobilize workers, including "enemy aliens" of various ethnic origins, within the confines of Canada's national boundaries.

During World War I, the government introduced conscription into the military amid cries of protest from farm organizations. Faced with the real threat of food shortages, however, the government agreed to periodically exempt farmers and farm labourers from service over the war years. Those enemy aliens — including Ukrainians, Czechoslovakians, Bulgarians, Croatians, and Germans — already involved in essential industries and agriculture were allowed to continue. Those who were not were interned and made to work for the service of the government for 25¢ a day building roads or clearing land for experimental farms in Kapuskasing (Ontario), Spirit Lake (Quebec), and Nappan (Nova Scotia). Initial efforts to employ these men for the service of municipalities, corporations, and private individuals were soon terminated due to "difficulties" with the wages offered (Kay 1983). Between military exemptions, the internment of enemy aliens, and the help of aboriginal workers, the needs of the agricultural sector were apparently filled and labour shortages ceased to be a problem until World War II.

At that time, the agricultural sector suffered even more severe labour shortages than during World War I, as able-bodied men and women flocked into the war industries and the military. By 1942, farmers and farm labourers were prohibited from any other than agricultural work. By 1943, the government agreed to postpone military service by essential agricultural workers and to transport farm workers free of charge to any province that suffered labour shortages. A joint agreement between Canada and the

United States also allowed free movement across the border of men and machines for the purpose of harvesting grain.

Recruitment into agricultural work did not stop there. In 1942, the beginning of the school year was postponed for two weeks so that approximately 3,000 Winnipeg high school students could harvest grain and sugar beets in the province (WT 1942: 13). In 1943, a "Vacation for Victory" campaign was promoted to encourage those employed in urban centres to volunteer their holiday time to work on the harvest (WT 1943b: 13). And, of course, there were always aboriginal Canadian and prisoner-of-war labour sources that could be tapped. The case of Japanese evacuees from British Columbia in 1942, however, was unique.

On behalf of the Manitoba Sugar Beet Growers Association and the Manitoba Sugar Company, the British Columbia Security Commission (BCSC) sought employment for initially 1,053 (later 1,162) Japanese on sugar beet farms in Manitoba (Adachi 1976; La Violette 1948). Since growers were eager to have a guaranteed supply of labour for their new industry, the provincial government accepted the workers on the condition that the federal government assume all financial and supervisory responsibilities for them. Many Japanese saw farm work as an opportunity to retain some semblance of family units rather than be dispersed across Canada. Since "small children weren't welcome" (Provincial Archives of Manitoba Oral History Collection, *The Japanese in Manitoba* [hereafter JM]: Tape C860), they quickly regrouped to meet the requirement that "families include at least 80 per cent workers and number approximately six in order to fit the available housing" (Roy, Granatstein, Iino and Takamura 1990: 142).

The opportunity proved disappointing to the Japanese. Once in Winnipeg, evacuees felt that growers scrutinized and selected them "like slaves" (JM: Tapes C842, C860). Despite recommendations by the BCSC that growers provide each family with accommodations suitable for year-round occupancy and with ready access to potable water, one extended family of seven found itself isolated "in one lonely shack in the middle of nowhere," a well for drinking water three miles away (JM: Tape C860). Another family of eight was crowded into a 16 x 20 foot shack, the only source of water the Red River until a well was found almost a mile away (JM: Tape C840). Others were housed in bug-infested barns or old silos, the floors of which were covered with mouldy grain (JM: Tapes C846, C864). Few accommodations were insulated against the cold. One family piled first dirt and then snow around the bottom of the house to keep the floor warm (JM: Tape C842). Another piled horse manure around the house, "right up to the windowsills" — it "smelled awful" (JM: Tape C852). To insulate and enlarge some accommodations, the BCSC provided building materials but, according to Takata (1983: 138), "some farmers were not above holding up the supplies for their own use."

The work was "back-breaking" (JM: Tape C842). Men in particular were

worked "like slaves" from dawn to dusk, especially during the harvest (JM: Tapes C840, C846). Some were paid only half of what they earned — if they were paid at all (JM: Tape C864).

Due to inclement weather for several years in a row, many Japanese soon discovered that the income they earned in the beet fields was inadequate to support the number of people assigned to each farm over the winter. The assumption that beet work alone could support the Japanese was based on optimistic figures from Alberta where a family of four workers, each responsible for ten acres, could earn between \$900 and \$1,000 per season (Dion 1991: 34). That this was not the case in Manitoba was forcibly brought home during the fall of 1942. Poor weather saw growers racing against time to complete the harvest by hiring students and city-dwellers. Every acre they worked meant one less for the Japanese.

Over their first winter, many Japanese expressed dissatisfaction with their living and working conditions and petitioned the BCSC to allow them the freedom to move to better farms. When growers tried to block the petition, the Japanese threatened not to honour their contracts for the following year. The growers relented (Takata 1983: 138). This collective action on the part of the Japanese was spearheaded by the Manitoba Japanese Joint Council (MJJC) which formed clandestinely in September 1942 but, because the BCSC forbade the Japanese to congregate, was not officially recognized until May 1943. Based upon years of experience in fishing and berry-farming co-operatives in British Columbia, the MJJC was welcomed by the Department of Labour's Japanese Division (having assumed the role of the BCSC in February 1943) as a mediator between the government, sugar beet interests, and the Japanese.

There was no lack of disputes for the MJJC to tackle. In 1943, the weather was again unsettled. Excessive rain and an infestation of weeds led to no fewer than five work stoppages by the Japanese to press for conformity of their contracts to working conditions. All work stoppages were successfully resolved by the MJJC (Dion 1991: 81). By the fall of 1943, it had become obvious that the Japanese would not be able to survive another winter on their seasonal wages and would either have to seek off-farm employment or else receive relief again. Fearing that the Japanese would not return to the farms once they left, both the Manitoba Sugar Beet Company and the Manitoba Sugar Beet Growers Association tried to argue that the BCSC had originally "frozen" workers to the industry. But the Japanese Division was unwilling to shoulder the expense of relief. In an attempt to satisfy all parties, its job search program was limited to seasonal employment so that many Japanese had no choice but to return to the farms in the spring.

As the availability of alternative employment increased, the MJJC saw this as an opportunity to negotiate income security for those Japanese who remained on the farms. A family was now guaranteed a minimum of \$8 per acre plus 15¢ per ton on harvests of nine tons per acre or over plus 35¢ extra per ton if loading was required (Dion 1991: 89).

In December 1945, the government exhorted farmers to increase beet production in order to offset a sugar scarcity. Despite monetary incentives, however, farmers were reluctant to take the risk due to looming labour shortages as more and more Japanese were permitted to leave the farms to accept permanent employment elsewhere. Suddenly, this racialized class fraction became the "most satisfactory workers" the growers had ever had. They willingly changed the contracts to guarantee the Japanese a minimum of \$8 per acre regardless of the condition of the crop plus an increase in rates for thinning, hoeing, harvesting, and loading in an attempt to recruit new evacuees (Dion 1991: 97).<sup>1</sup>

The labour supply that has proved the most contentious on a long-term basis has been that of aboriginal Canadians. Wartime programs sponsored by the federal government were few. During World War I, Indians were merely encouraged to become more self-sufficient, to increase their earnings from occupations other than farming, and to help with the harvests of white farmers (Carter 1990: 250). Demoralized by the government's lack of assistance in agriculture, few bands in southern Manitoba voluntarily increased their farming efforts. By 1917, however, many aboriginal women were deriving "considerable income" from selling baskets, mats, moccasins, beadwork, seneca root, and wild fruit and by working as seamstresses and domestics for white families. Aboriginal men were earning high wages as farm labourers, on road work and railroad construction, in mines, and as clerks for traders and merchants (CSP 1918, No. 27: 27). During World War II, between 300 and 500 aboriginal Canadians from southern Manitoba reserves (*WT* 1942: 13) and 460 from northern reserves were expected to assist in the harvest. The latter number was projected to be 1,000 by 1943 and approximately 600 in 1944 (*WT* 1944: 5). Those from southern reserves had been assisting in Manitoba harvests for decades and were experienced in such work. But it was to the apparent surprise of growers and government alike to discover that the inexperienced northerners "adapted quickly" to harvest work. In fact, growers considered them more than satisfactory and "voluntarily paid the Indians the higher wages" of \$4 a day for stooking (stacking sheaves of grain) and \$4.50 a day for threshing as opposed to \$3 and \$3.50 respectively (*WT* 1943a: 11). Whether in the beet fields or in the bush, in lumber camps or pulp and paper mills, "Indian labour," wrote the Director of the Indian Affairs Branch (1943-44: 150), "contributed to the success of all these enterprises."

The post-war years, however, were difficult for aboriginal peoples. Reserve farming had long been in decline and mechanization was beginning to reduce the demand for workers on white farms. During the 1950s, the Department of Indian Affairs made some effort to place aboriginal families on sugar beet farms in Manitoba, Alberta, and Ontario (NA, RG 10, v. 8414, file 1/21-1, pt. 3, 21 June 1955; pt. 5, 14 May 1958; pt. 6, 25 March 1959). Apart from this, little else was available until the 1960s when government assistance and various make-work projects for aboriginal peoples were implemented.

### **Mexican Mennonites**

One reliable source of farm labour, especially for growers in southwestern Manitoba, has been the so-called "Mexican Mennonites." The original members of this Anabaptist sect immigrated to Canada from Russia in the late 1800s seeking group settlement, freedom of language and religion, and exemption from military service in an attempt to keep the group's ideals of strict conformity in sacred and secular matters intact. Those who settled in Manitoba represented four subgroups of the Mennonite communities of Russia — *Chortitza* and *Furstenland* (the conservative *Altikolonier* or Old Colony), *Bergthal* (the most liberal), and *Kleine Gemeinde* (middle-ground) (Bohuslawsky 1988b).

Within ten years of their arrival, the Manitoba government began to renege on parts of the agreement it had made with the Mennonites in order to hasten their assimilation into Canadian society. But incorporation of the colonies into the system of municipal government (1880) and public schooling (1890) and, during World War II, of their members into the Canadian Armed Forces was viewed by some Mennonites as a deliberate attack on their autonomy. In response to both real and perceived threats to their model communities, many Mennonites, especially the more conservative, decided once more to emigrate, this time to Mexico. There was, however, another important reason for their decision to emigrate — scarcity of land in the Mennonite colonies of Manitoba.

Their departure was not without problems. First, their farms were quickly bought up by speculators at a very low price (\$15 to \$25 an acre) and later resold to their brethren, including returnees from Mexico, for \$75 to \$100 an acre. Second, the exodus to Mexico greatly reduced the power of the *Waisenamt*, the trust organization in charge of group finances. Rather than close the accounts down, the organization handed them over to a Notary Public in Morden who was to collect debts owed to the emigrants and send them along to Mexico. Those who remained in Manitoba simply refused to repay their debts. This second incident, in particular, created a feeling of resentment between those who stayed and those who left which some say still exists today (Redekop 1969).

Nor did their problems end in Mexico. Wealth as such is not scorned by the Mennonites but it is generally believed that "one must prosper only in those ways consistent with the norms of hard work and honesty" (Redekop 1969: 98). For a traditionally agrarian peoples like the Mennonites, this means farming and rules out activities such as marketing which, besides being considered speculative and therefore of questionable honesty, imply extensive contact with the outside world (Sawatzky 1971).

In spite of these beliefs, not all had access to the limited land base in Mexico and, as their population grew, tensions developed between the *Witte* (those with property) and the increasing number of *Anwohner* (those without). The *Anwohner* accused the *Witte* of intentionally perpetuating their existence as a pool of cheap and captive labour by giving preferential

employment to Mexicans. The *Wirts* claimed that the *Anwohner* were simply unable to make anything of themselves and thus deserved their low status in the colonies. The *Wirts* also claimed that if Mexicans were not given jobs they would be driven by poverty to crime. Besides, Mexican labourers respected authority whereas the *Anwohner* considered themselves the social equals of the *Wirts* and expected to be treated accordingly (Sawatzky 1971).

This growing disparity in the material well-being of the *Wirts* and the *Anwohner* leads one to question the nature of the class structure among the Mexican Mennonites. On the one hand, Sawatzky (1971: 302) states that:

Although it cannot be said that social class stratification exists as a deliberately created and sustained element of Mennonite society, nevertheless differences in economic status tend to be carried over into social relations.

On the other, Redekop (1969) claims that among Mexican Mennonites there is neither class structure nor class consciousness, yet he identifies three classes: an upper class consisting of religious and secular leaders and prosperous farmers; a middle class of small farmers and those in related occupations; and a lower class of cowherds, the landless, and teachers.

It seems that economic status among Mexican Mennonites is not only related to access to land, one of the few acceptable sources of wealth, but also to occupation. The possibility that differences in economic status may carry over into social relations to form a class structure does not necessarily mean, however, that a consciousness of class has to exist either in Mexico or in Manitoba. Because contact with the outside world is frowned upon, social relations tend to be limited to those within and between colonies, making it appear to their members that the relations between landowners and labourers, colony leaders and members, clergy and laypersons are personal, not economic, ones. Working the land so that another may become wealthy, for example, is felt to be worth the "religious return" of knowing that one is at least carrying out God's will (Harper n.d.: 31).

Life was not easy in their new homeland of Mexico. From the beginning, many returned regularly to Canada during the harvest season to earn enough to survive. Others would stay in Canada for several years in the hope of earning enough to buy land in Mexico. When immigration regulations were relaxed after World War II, even more made the seasonal trip to Canada. Most who come are from the poorer colonies in northern Mexico where the number of landless is increasing. Those born in 1947 or later to Canadian parents may also apply for Canadian citizenship. So determined are they to return to Canada either legally or illegally that, in 1966, it came to the attention of the federal government that some were being transported 2,000 miles nonstop to work on sugar beet and potato farms at minimum wage or less in southwestern Manitoba. In one case, twenty-nine people were crowded into a camper unit designed for four or five on top of a half-ton truck. Several were reported to be suffering from dysentery (WT 1966: 1).

As to working conditions in southwestern Manitoba, a life skills instructor, many of whose students were Mexican Mennonites, noted in the 1978-79 academic year that one student "had lost his left arm, part of his shoulder, and part of his left side in a rock crusher" (Harper n.d.: 27). Others had lost fingers or ribs in work-related accidents. When asked if they thought their employers were saving money by using unsafe equipment, their unanimous response was, "Probably not that much" (Harper n.d.: 27). Not only is union activity forbidden by the church, it is also frowned upon by community members. "Unions take your money," the students told the instructor, "but what can they do for you?" (Harper n.d.: 27). Besides, one's employer is often a relative and how can one strike against a relative?

In the late 1980s, communities in southwestern Manitoba witnessed another influx of Mexican Mennonites seeking work. Not only were they escaping from the ravages of a stagnant economy but also from the possibility of conscription into the Mexican military under impending social unrest. The Mennonite Central Committee (Manitoba) estimated that, in 1986, there were 416 returnees; in 1987, 461 (Turner 1988a: 1); and, in 1988, 535 (Suderman 1991: 2). Many found employment in the manufacturing sector; others, seasonal work on potato and sugar beet farms. In either case, they were a "cheap and eager labour pool" (Turner 1988a: 1) who were resented by their Manitoba brethren.

Because of the poverty in which many live in Mexico, Mexican Mennonites are seen as "backward" and "dirty" (Sawatzky 1971). The more conservative of them are accused of being unreliable because they leave a job at a crucial time and return to Mexico to avoid having to send their children to public school in Manitoba. The most serious criticism stems from the fact that, in hard economic times in Manitoba, such an influx of immigrants puts a strain on community resources. Mexican Mennonites are criticized for taking full advantage of all the public assistance programs to which they are entitled but contributing little to the local economy since they take most of their earnings back with them to Mexico:

[Many] members of the community feel that if in its time it was "impossible" for these people to continue to live amidst the "evils" of Canadian society, then from the moral point of view they should not now look to Canada for a living; in addition, they are regarded as not having contributed to the creation of the wealth which they are now "undeservedly" sharing (Sawatzky 1971: 322).

Mexican Mennonites deny that they experience any prejudice against them (Turner 1988b: 2).

By 1991, southwestern Manitoba's manufacturing sector had experienced a downturn and the influx of Mexican Mennonites had virtually ceased. Once again, the majority of this ethnically based floating surplus population returned to Mexico until 1995, when southwestern Manitoba experienced yet another economic boom. Forced from Mexico by a lack

of land, a depressed economy and drought, even more Mexican Mennonites are trying to make Manitoba their permanent home.

One young *Anwohner* declared that he had gained forty-four pounds after only a few months in Manitoba and that he had no desire to return to a life of poverty in Mexico. He and others found work on factory assembly lines, still others on sugar beet or hog farms. At the time, the manager of the Pembina Valley Development Corporation opined that "the impact of these (returning) Mennonites is positive since a good, well-motivated workforce bodes well for our economy" (Heinrichs 1996: 3). He might have added, "until the next economic downturn."

### **The Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program**

#### *The Origins of the Program*

In a country like Canada with more than 1.5 million unemployed, what is meant by a "labour shortage"? To the commercial market gardener, it means a lack of both "skilled" workers, experienced in the use of expensive machinery, and "unskilled" workers, accustomed to stoop labour. It means a lack of workers whom the grower trusts to live side by side with the grower's family on the farm site. It means a lack of workers whom the grower considers reliable and motivated and who share the same pride in the farm as the grower. Ironically, it also means a lack of workers who will accept less than competitive wages.

In theory, the official stance of both federal and provincial levels of government on unemployment has long been that:

The maintenance of a surplus of workers at the bottom [of the employment ladder] is extremely costly to the nation in unemployment benefits, welfare assistance, loss in tax collections and in weakening the productive capacity of the country, to say nothing of the social evils created by idleness (Manitoba Department of Agriculture and Immigration 1959: 88).

In reality, a large reserve army of labour is beneficial to capital. The farmer's dilemma, at least today, is one of relative, not absolute, labour shortages.

Under pressures from growers in Ontario, the federal government agreed to import labourers from the Commonwealth Caribbean as of 1966. The program was meant to be only a temporary solution to labour shortages and was justified to the public as "development aid" — workers could use the money they earned in Canada to stimulate their own economies at home (Bogacz and Forsyth 1990). Ontario growers resented the fact that under the Canada-Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program they were expected to pay the workers' return airfare. They preferred instead to pay less expensive brokerage fees to recruiters of Mexican workers who followed the harvest north into the United States. Growers were warned by Canada Manpower, however, that only after they had exhausted all Canadian sources would Mexicans be allowed in (WT 1973a). So insistent were Ontario growers that their crops

were rotting in the fields due to labour shortages that the federal government finally decided to study the issue.<sup>2</sup>

The study, which concluded that growers were unable to hire and keep Canadians because of "inhumane" treatment, cited

instances of a family of 10 working in the fields for a family wage of \$50 to \$60 a week, while being housed in an old chicken-coop without sanitation (WT 1974a: 2).

Not all growers abused their workers, of course, but those who did were subject to media exposure. One Ontario grower's intransigence on the housing issue was reflected in his response to the discovery of his one-room shacks with cracked walls stuffed with newspaper to keep out the rain: "I guess I'll have to fix them up. The government's starting to come around" (WT 1973b: 5).

By 1974, Canada Manpower had established a total of thirty Agricultural Employment Services (AES) offices across Canada in an attempt to standardize the working and living conditions of domestic farm labour. Employer-employee agreements (see Appendix A) must stipulate both the terms of employment and the type and cost to the employee of accommodation. At the same time, the federal government, in response to the powerful Ontario farm lobby, agreed to expand the Foreign Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program to include Mexico. When Manitoba commercial market gardeners heard of these arrangements, they, too, wanted to participate.

#### *The Structure of the Program*

In contrast to the recruitment process of foreign workers in other countries (see, for example, Haney 1979), the process in Canada has never had even the appearance of being under anything other than government control. From its inception, the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program has depended on the co-ordinated effort of government agencies in both sending and receiving countries. The prospective employer must first complete a Human Resource Forecast form (see Appendix B), indicating anticipated labour shortages and proving that he/she has exhausted all sources of labour both locally through an AES office and nationally through the Canada Employment Centre (CEC). If the CEC determines that a grower qualifies for the foreign labour program, the job order plus a signed employer-employee agreement (see Appendix C) is sent to a regional Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) office for approval. The information is forwarded to the appropriate government liaison officer in Canada who then notifies the Minister of Labour in the sending country as to the number and names (if applicable) of workers required. The minister recruits (through newspapers, posters, and word of mouth) and selects the workers, arranges for their medical examinations and documentation, and conveys the results to the CEIC post in the sending country for final approval. Once this process

has been completed, the workers are flown to Canada, received by their liaison officer, and transported to their place of employment.

The Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program agreement (see Appendix D) is valid for a three-year period but is reviewed annually and may be terminated by either party at any time, provided that written notice has been given at least three months in advance and after bilateral consultation. The type of employment must be agricultural and, at present, no longer than eight months a year (April to November). If named workers are unavailable, the Government of Mexico is obligated to maintain a reserve pool of at least 100 unnamed workers who may be called on at any time to fill those positions. All workers must be male, eighteen years of age or older, citizens of Mexico, and have no criminal record. This arrangement is very cost-effective for the receiving country. It means that the state and the employer only pay for the cost of maintenance of the worker during his stay in Canada while the cost of reproduction of the worker's family is borne either by the sending country or by the family itself (Burawoy 1976).

The employer must be able to guarantee no less than six forty-hour weeks of agricultural work for each employee (thus excluding potato and sugar beet growers, whose operations are highly mechanized, from the program). If circumstances prevent this, the employee is compensated either at the prevailing wage rate for the type of work he has been hired to do or by a cash advance to cover personal expenses. Under normal conditions, the employee may agree to work more than the required eight hours a day or five days a week (with no provision for overtime wage rates). He may also agree to work for another employer. Acceptable living accommodations inspected in advance by a designated government employee must be provided free of charge. If meals rather than kitchen facilities are provided by the employer, he may deduct \$6.50 a day from the worker's pay-cheque. Other deductions the employer may make include health insurance premiums plus 2 percent of the worker's gross earnings (no less than \$50 and no more than \$166) to partially cover transportation costs.

Given such high levels of unemployment, especially on reserves, the Government of Manitoba had always opposed the use of foreign farm labour at least in theory. As early as 1958, sugar beet growers had petitioned the government to allow them to import Mexican workers but were refused (Manitoba Department of Agriculture and Immigration 1959). Even in 1974, when sugar beet and onion growers complained of being "forced" to pay the minimum wage just to attract Canadian workers, the government still ignored them (*WT* 1974b). The only exception made that year was to allow a Winkler potato grower to bring in nine Mexicans after a Canada-wide search for truck drivers failed. In January 1975, the provincial government tabled a policy on immigration which stated that the import of foreign agricultural workers was only a temporary solution to labour shortages. In the meantime, growers must adhere to recommended

guidelines to make farm labour more attractive to Canadians by offering a minimum wage, a forty-hour work week plus overtime pay, vacation time or pay; acceptable housing facilities, and pension, unemployment insurance and workers' compensation benefits.

That same year, thirty Mexicans were imported under the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and growers were eager to share their opinions with the public. "The Indians and Mexicans work together with no bad blood," said one grower; "[if] there wasn't so much welfare, [Canadians] would have to work" (Hunter 1975: 5). Seldom did it occur to growers that, at the prevailing wage rate, a worker could make the same or more on welfare.

The Mexican presence might have been overlooked for another year had one unfortunate incident not made the headlines that summer. It was discovered that living accommodations for aboriginal workers on certain sugar beet farms in southern Manitoba were so woefully inadequate that the Children's Aid Society removed five children from the shacks and old milk trucks that served as their homes. One journalist commented sarcastically:

It is ironic that the Mexican migrants, who have a history of being exploited by California land owners, live in comfort while the Indians, from reserves in rural Manitoba, exist in filth and squalor (Hunter 1975: 1).

To this growers responded that, since the Manitoba government refused to participate in a federal-provincial cost sharing program for housing, they could hardly be expected to shoulder the financial burden on their own, especially for a seasonal labour force consisting of extended families. Not all growers were remiss in providing acceptable housing for their domestic workers, of course. Motioning toward three well-kept homes on his employer's vegetable farm in Portage la Prairie, one aboriginal Canadian worker said, "There is a lot of work to be done on these places, but they are okay" (Hunter 1975: 5). The fact that money was available to house Mexican workers, however, was never mentioned.

#### *The Manitoba Farm Workers Association*

In March 1976, some 450 Indian and Métis farm workers, assisted by a labour consultant to the New Democratic Party (NDP), announced that they were organizing themselves into the Manitoba Farm Workers Association (MFWA). Their demands were basic to any industry yet had never been included under Manitoba's Employment Standards Act. Highest on their list of demands were recognition of the MFWA as the workers' bargaining agent, mandatory job classifications, and recommended wage rates. Further demands included a grievance procedure, sick leave, workers' compensation, higher safety standards, first-aid kits, drinking water, toilets in the fields, rest periods and lunch facilities.<sup>3</sup> Housing and transportation were also pressing issues since a lack of these amenities put MFWA members at a distinct disadvantage compared to the

Mexicans. Some aboriginal workers had to leave their communities at 5:00 a.m. to arrive at work by 8:00 a.m. Underlying their demands was their insistence that, while it was the growers' right to seed and harvest, it was the workers' right to be treated with dignity (see Appendix E).

Journalists eager to cover the story seemed disappointed and even puzzled that workers were reluctant to discuss the MFWA, especially in front of their employers:

Three native workers ... laughed when asked about the [MFWA] and said they'd never heard of it. At least one of them had relatives involved in organizing the association (McCook 1976: 5).

One of the biggest hurdles the MFWA faced was to get all growers to the table. "The farmers who are doing the most ripping off don't come," said one member (Rosner 1976: 4). They were the ones whom the MFWA accused of paying their workers less than minimum wage, denying them vacation pay, and reneging on monetary incentives to make them show up on time.

The first attempt at negotiations between representatives of the MFWA and those of vegetable, potato, and sugar beet growers in May 1976 failed. Despite assurances from the province's Agriculture minister that the MFWA was a lobbying group, not a union, and did not have the right to strike, growers refused to sign a written agreement. Some flatly refused to hire aboriginal labourers anymore. Only one agreed to pay more than the minimum wage (*WT* 1976a). Talks soon broke off, with the MFWA threatening not to assist in the 1976 harvest if it had no written contract. Several days later, twenty members of the MFWA picketed the main Canada Manpower office in Winnipeg to protest the import of Mexican workers.

The minister's attempt to mediate between the MFWA and growers also failed. Growers argued that they wanted to retain a "gentlemen's agreement" approach to hiring, implying that the employer-employee relationship was one of equality. Their opinion of unions was summed up by one grower: "[Once] you have a set of rules ... the flexibility is lost, it dehumanizes" (McCook 1976: 5). The NDP accused growers of living in the past and insisted they become more progressive in their thinking; the MFWA charged the growers with racism. When negotiations deteriorated into a shouting match, the Agricultural minister announced he would leave future discussions to workers and growers themselves.

He could not, however, just walk away. In the Manitoba Legislature, he had to answer to the opposition who criticized the NDP for giving more assistance to the MFWA than to growers. The minister disagreed. Not only had the NDP assisted both the MFWA and growers in preparing negotiating proposals, but every facet of a planned Local Employment Assistance Program (LEAP), including grower seminars on employer-employee relations as well as the training of aboriginal labour, would be funded by federal and provincial monies. In the interim, the provincial government had commissioned a study into the farm labour situation in Manitoba. The study,

entitled "The Right Thing for the Wrong Reason" (Marcoux 1976), concluded that, since the available number of aboriginal farm workers (435) far exceeded the requirements of growers (approximately 104 full-time and 126 part-time), the import of Mexicans should be phased out by 1980. The study also outlined the strategy by which aboriginal labour, through government assistance, could be mobilized for the benefit of growers. The strategy included alcohol education, a nutrition program, a basic life skills program, and a youth program to foster pride in aboriginal identity. But the strategy did not end there. It also included worker retraining and upgrading, and ongoing government support of the MFWA. Two growers signed as sponsors.

While the study was being conducted, tension escalated between growers on the one hand and the government and farm workers on the other. At least one MFWA member and his family were threatened with physical violence. The NDP was accused of government interference and was blamed for inciting hostility and racism around Portage la Prairie. The premier of Manitoba was accused of having moved too fast in trying to change growers' minds about the labour situation and that this might only have a negative impact in the long run. Growers might switch to capital-intensive production and eliminate jobs; food processors might pull out of the province and eliminate even more jobs. Some even suggested that the premier's credibility with the farm vote would be in jeopardy in the provincial election of 1977 (Hainstock 1976).

By June 1976, the twenty-four Mexicans who had been expected that year were working quietly alongside their aboriginal Canadian counterparts. Despite complaints that Mexicans were taking jobs away from Canadians, "Mexicans and natives have indicated no hard feelings toward each other this year," said one grower (McCook 1976: 5). Disputes had been minimal and there had been no work stoppages. The Mexican consul general at the time noted that "Most Mexicans have a lot of very good friends among Indians in Canada. They identify with them as workmates," but added, "I warned them when they arrived, the first fight, the first riot, I'd send them back to Mexico" (WT 1976b: 1). One Mexican worker admitted that he detected "some bitterness" on the part of local labourers that summer although another said they just ignore it: "We say we don't understand Indian."

Undercurrents of racism against aboriginal workers could still be detected in the comment of one grower that "Mexicans may be more productive in comparison with local labour because their need is greater... Their Canadian colleagues ... are accustomed to more of a hand-to-mouth existence" (WT 1976b: 15). Another grower commented that Mexicans demonstrate to others that "you have to work in this country to make a living" (McCook 1976: 5). Because of these tensions, a major clash between growers on the one hand and aboriginal rights groups and labour organizations on the other was anticipated.

As a result of Marcoux's (1976) study, it was discovered that 312 of the 450 MFWA members went without work in 1975. The discovery surprised no one. A spokesperson for the growers had already informed the media that he knew there were enough locals for his own labour needs but that he simply preferred to hire Mexicans (Rosner 1976: 4). Even though the following year was an election year and proposed changes to Manitoba labour law had been placed on the back burner, the NDP decided to terminate the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program for 1977.

The AES manager at the time apologized for any misunderstandings between growers, workers, and the government. Commercial market gardening was still in its infancy in Manitoba, he explained, and growers had been unaware of what was expected of them (Meakin 1977). Even so, he added, aboriginal workers should be responsible for providing their own housing or means of transportation to and from the job. They would be expected to do so if they worked in Winnipeg.

Growers were even more upset. One of the largest growers, like Ontario growers before him, claimed that, due to labour shortages, his vegetables were rotting in the fields (Riley 1977). Another claimed that the ban on Mexican workers was crippling the industry. Cutbacks in production and a decline in produce quality and variety, he predicted, would lead to the import of vegetables, higher prices, an end to seasonal agricultural jobs, and reduced employment in secondary industries such as food processing. All blamed "bureaucrats" in Ottawa who take decisions with no firsthand knowledge of a situation. Mexicans create more jobs than they take away, growers argued, especially since they are "more adapted to menial labour" (Wall 1977: 4), to which an Indian worker from Sandy Bay responded that, of course, Mexicans were motivated: "[They] had to produce or they would be sent back. That's incentive to work" (Wall 1977: 4). But it did not mean they were "better" workers than local labourers.

Canada Manpower officials were unmoved by growers' complaints. "I find it difficult to understand why farmers can't find 24 suitable labourers out of [a] pool of 300," said one (WT 1977: 4).

Although the NDP lost the provincial election to the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) in 1977, the proposed LEAP to train local labour and to educate growers in employer-employee relations went ahead. The results did not impress growers. The program was a waste of money, they complained. In their opinion, locals with any ambition would seek better jobs elsewhere and those who did stay were incapable of retaining the information given them. One Conservative member of the Legislative Assembly went so far as to blame the MFWA's employment problems not on its members' lack of training or education but on their lack of initiative (*Winnipeg Free Press* [hereafter WFP] 1978: 10). By early 1978, the MFWA conceded that some Mexican workers should be brought in if it could be proven that employment opportunities for Canadians would increase as

some growers had claimed they would. Whether or not the MFWA had any choice in the matter is unknown.

Eighteen Mexicans were brought in that year, a number "so small," scoffed one grower, "as to be ridiculous in terms of the national employment situation" (Francis 1978: 53). The obvious question might then be, why bother at all? Instead, the grower concluded that 100 Mexicans should be brought in for 1979. Another grower complained that, since the formation of the VGAM some fifty years earlier, the number of growers had declined due to the combination of low crop prices and a shortage of experienced labour. As of 1978, carrot and cabbage acreage was down, he said. There were no longer any lettuce growers, almost no tomato growers, and only two celery and three onion growers (Francis 1978). He did not mention the warning the UVPM had issued in the late 1960s that small growers were being forced out of the industry because they were unable to compete with medium growers in the VGAM. Nor did he mention Canadian wholesalers' and processors' preference for cheaper American and Mexican produce. According to growers, the problem had to be the labour force.

#### *The Program Today*

Except for occasional criticism from the NDP, the issue of the foreign labour program in Manitoba has seldom been broached publicly since 1977. In fact, the number of Mexicans has increased, not decreased, over the years from nine in 1974, to forty-one in 1982, to seventy-five in 1991. Since then, it has fluctuated between sixty-five and seventy although it has never reached the imposed cap of 100. To date, farm workers are still not covered under Manitoba's Employment Standards Act although more housing has been provided for aboriginal workers. Due to government cutbacks to the Day-Haul Program, responsibility for transporting domestic workers to and from their communities was transferred from AES to the MFWA. While the AES manager hoped growers would eventually assume this responsibility themselves, he thought it was unlikely.

According to the president of the MFWA, nothing has really changed. If anything, the association's power has eroded since 1977. Membership has dropped from 450 to 150 and some claim that the MFWA no longer exists. The government grants a few MFWA demands now and again but growers continue to treat their workers according to the mood of the day. There are, for example, no "thanks" for overtime during the harvest, no cash bonuses on workers' paycheques, no "big meals" in gratitude for a job well done once the season is over. Some growers disagree. I was told by one that Indian labourers are "a bunch of whiners" who only work long enough to qualify for unemployment insurance. At least one grower tucks cash bonuses into his workers' pay envelopes now and then, and more than one throw harvest parties for their workers at the end of the season. So what if Canada's unemployment rate is 10 or 11 percent, he asked me rhetorically — why strap farmers with the burden of employing the unemployable?

What happened since 1977 to erode the MFWA's power base? Based upon Morin's (1952) survey of factors which led to the successful unionization of American farm workers, the stage appeared to be set. Many MFWA members were marginalized by ethnicity, social status and, sometimes, language from the wider society and found it difficult to either advance on the job or find nonagricultural employment. But dissatisfaction with the status quo does not always lead to unionization. It may also require a sudden increase in the tempo of work or the threat of a wage cut or job loss, in this case, to Mexicans. The appearance of an effective organizer from the outside is also important. Up to that point, Aboriginal Canadian farm workers had been unaware of their rights and reluctant to confront growers with their grievances. And despite the fact that farm workers may have lacked the strategic skills to organize, they gained these plus financial and administrative support from both the federal and provincial governments. Nor did the NDP abandon the MFWA during an election year. According to a former Manitoba Agricultural Manpower officer, once most of the MFWA's demands were met, the conflict was all but over. It was left to civil servants to "solve" the problem of importing Mexican labour. Their solution was a compromise whereby an incremental number of Canadians per Mexican would be hired every year until 1980, when the program would be terminated. At the time, the compromise seemed to please everyone — the federal government, in accordance with its "Canadians first" employment policy; farmers, who insist that Mexicans create, not take away, jobs; and the MFWA, whose members would be guaranteed employment.

Upon closer examination, factors other than compromise may also have been responsible for the dissolution of the MFWA. Grower hostility was one. The dispersal of workers throughout farms in south-central Manitoba, rather than their congregation in one place like factory workers, was another. And, according to a spokesperson for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, leadership should have come from the workers themselves, not from the outside. How likely was this to have happened? One former MFWA activist told me that many aboriginal workers were illiterate, unable even to read chemical containers on the job site. Their brown-bag lunches of potato chips and soft drinks robbed them of energy in the hot afternoon sun. For some, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome made hand-to-eye coordination difficult. These most basic issues of well-being would have to be addressed before that of leadership. I also noted that, despite claims by the MFWA that farm labour is not just a stepping-stone to a better job, the former activist now has a managerial position in a service organization in Winnipeg and the president, himself, was interested in pursuing a university degree in community development. More importantly, perhaps, is the question of aboriginal self-identity. In bold letters, a large poster in the reception area of the office of the president of the MFWA asked: *Are You Ready for Self-government?* It is likely that aboriginal farm workers identify less with their class position than with their membership in their communities, kinship networks, and ethnic groups. Still,

they have no quarrel with Mexicans. As one experienced aboriginal farm worker maintained, "I'm just as fast as them" (Hill 1983: 1).

For their part, growers seem to have concluded that hiring foreign workers is by now not just a temporary solution to labour shortages but their right. The best proof of this, I was told, is the "totally unacceptable" practice of laying off local and out-of-province labourers once the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program has been approved for another year. Yet some growers still insist that "Mexicans ... are the best workers because they're driven by poverty... The local people ... are either unemployed or on welfare... They need constant supervision" (Armstrong 1987: 4). Initially, the growers expected the Mexicans to do any job they were assigned. The Mexican consul general at the time observed: "The farmers know how to get a lot of profit with the Mexicans. They do everything, hoeing, truck driving, all for the same salary" (WT 1976b: 15). This quickly ended when a vehicle mishap involving an unlicensed Mexican driver forced the CEC to issue job classifications and corresponding recommended wage rates (see Appendices F and G). Minor irregularities still exist. The inspection of housing for Mexicans is supposed to be done in person by a designated government employee but is often conducted over the telephone. Housing is supposed to be supplied at no cost to Mexican workers but some growers charge them for utilities of which there is no mention in the employer-employee agreement.

According to the president of the MFWA, the Mexicans are treated as badly as Indians used to be. Since they speak little English, the Mexicans are probably unaware that they are only required to perform agricultural work, yet growers make them tend their lawns and gardens in slack periods. Socializing with locals after hours is discouraged by growers who believe that the Mexicans will learn "bad things." Even shopping in town was prohibited until recently. Originally, supplies were brought to the Mexicans so that they never left the farm site. But the Mexicans remain keen. "All the work here is easy for a Mexican," one claimed (Hill 1983: 1). Another said, "I don't mind working long hours... I've been working hard all my life. In Mexico, I work all day long, six days a week" (WFP 1987: 4).

Most growers are enthusiastic at having found labourers whom they consider to be as dedicated to hard work as they are themselves. "You could get them up at three in the morning," one grower told me, "and they'd be ready to go. And they never complain ... at least not to your face." One of the growers' Mexican workers, who claimed he had back problems, said he was unable to work more than an eight-hour day but, after being convinced by his co-workers that he would not be rehired the following year, decided to work the additional hours. Another was informed that his wife, who had been ill for some time, had died but he decided to stay and work rather than return to Mexico for her funeral. "Now that's a strong work ethic," the grower nodded approvingly.

A strong work ethic? The Mexicans have no choice but to work a twelve-

hour day, seven days a week, said the employer specialist at Winnipeg's CEIC office — they are a "captive labour force." Farmers may benefit from these reliable, self-managing workers, he said, but the wages, however low they may seem, mean that hundreds of thousands of dollars are taken out of Canada each year, dollars that might otherwise have been spent here. As it stands now, the federal government must spend more on social assistance programs for the unemployed while the Mexicans apparently brag that they will build homes to "rival those of the rich" in their own country. For as much as growers complain about the local labour force, he said, they resist the idea of hiring at 120 percent of their needs so that enough workers will show up on any given day. The Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program is a "sweetheart" deal that, in his opinion, has gone on for far too long.

#### Notes

1. The power of Japanese farm workers to successfully organize under conditions of absolute labour shortages may be contrasted to the efforts of sugar beet workers in Alberta whose attempts to unionize under conditions of relative labour shortages during the 1930s were defeated by growers (Thompson and Seager 1978).
2. Whether or not the Canadian government would have been aware of it, large growers in California consistently claim that produce will rot in the fields unless foreign workers are available to fill labour shortages. Galarza (1977: 367-68) calls this "double-edged mystification," intended to arouse public sympathy for growers and to worry consumers that the price of basic foods might increase. But factors other than labour shortages also result in waste. There is waste by legal command, that is, the intentional destruction of produce to rid the fresh market of unwanted surplus; waste due to "acts of God"; waste to relieve gluts in the processing market; and waste for bargaining purposes, that is, the withholding of shipments to processors in an attempt to get a higher price. Whatever the cause of waste, the result is highly photogenic.
3. Because of the nature of some of the MFWA's demands, such as toilets in the fields and daycare, the NDP was reluctant to become involved at first, thinking of these problems as "women's issues" best dealt with by a more appropriate organization.
4. This strategy was pursued by sugar beet and potato growers who, although agreeing to recognize the MFWA, by 1977 had mechanized their operations and no longer required large numbers of workers.

## — Chapter 4 —

# BILATERAL AND TRILATERAL RELATIONS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

If the development of Manitoba commercial market gardening seems to be primarily a Canadian and secondarily a Mexican issue, one must also consider the role the United States has played. The Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program derives much of its structure from the former United States-Mexico Bracero Program, the bilateral agreement that provided American growers with cheap Mexican labour for more than twenty-five years. The program marked the beginning of Mexico's reliance on out-migration of its surplus labour force as a safety valve for its inability to solve its economic problems.

Recent neo-liberal trade policies such as the Canada-United States Trade Agreement (CUSTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have forged even closer relationships between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. But "free trade" does not always mean "fair trade," as Manitoba commercial market gardeners have discovered. The CUSTA has been blamed for the closure of processing plants and the delay of Manitoba exports at the Canada-United States border. The NAFTA is predicted to have even more detrimental effects in the future as Canadian horticulture is exposed to the vagaries of the free market. Those who have the most to lose in these trade policies are the medium petty bourgeoisie, those Canadian farmers whose survival may be at stake.

### The United States-Mexico Bracero Program

What are the origins of the "sweetheart deal" that Manitoba commercial market gardeners presently enjoy? Although I was told that there was no coincidence between the termination of the United States-Mexico Bracero Program in 1964 and the initiation of the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program in 1974, the details of the two bilateral agreements are virtually identical, which suggests that the former served as a model for the latter. This may come as no surprise — by 1974, Mexico could claim a total of twenty-six years of experience (1917-1921 and 1942-1964) with such agreements with the United States. The similarities between the two agreements, however, end there; the differences, while not the exclusive focus of this section, are also significant.

First, economies of scale in agriculture, or "factories in the fields" as McWilliams (1939) termed them, developed far sooner in the United States than in Canada, leading to claims of domestic labour shortages and to the use of *braceros* (legally contracted farm workers) as early as World War I. Manitoba market gardening only achieved economy of scale or commercial status after World War II. Second, the United States-Mexico Bracero Program was often jeopardized by flagrant abuse of Mexican workers by their employers resulting, in one case, in a ban on the use of *braceros* in Texas from 1943 to 1947. Third, the United States-Mexico program was further complicated by the growing presence of illegals ("wetbacks"), especially after 1944. At least to this point, the viability of the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program has not been threatened by either worker abuse<sup>1</sup> or illegals.

Kiser and Kiser (1979: 2) claim that, in the United States, "the really fundamental arguments for and against the use of Mexican labour have not changed significantly since 1917." The same may be said of Canada since 1945. On the one hand, growers insist that the industry is continually plagued by domestic labour shortages. On the other, opponents claim that if domestic workers were offered a living wage there would be few if any labour shortages.

At the outset, both programs were justified as a temporary employment strategy to offset domestic labour shortages. The process by which growers qualified for Mexican workers was also similar. Employers in both the United States and Canada first had to demonstrate their need for Mexicans by proving that their efforts to hire domestic workers (primarily through the United States Employment Service in the United States or Agricultural Employment Services in Canada<sup>2</sup>) had been unsuccessful. Upon approval of their request, employers were then expected to enter into written agreements with the *braceros* and to repatriate them to Mexico upon termination of the contract. Claims of domestic labour shortages were seldom verified by the American government. Galarza (1964) explains how growers regularly "created" such shortages. Growers would estimate in advance the number of *braceros* they would need that season. Advertisements would then be placed for domestic workers but, since the wages offered would be so low, few would apply. Those who did might even be denied employment and *braceros* hired in their stead. This is not entirely unlike the practice of some Manitoba growers who lay off domestic workers once their request for Mexicans has been approved for another year.

Unable to prevent mass emigration of its workers after the revolution (1910-1920), the Mexican government at first published a "model contract" (1920) in an attempt to protect its workers from abuse in the United States. The contract called for the payment of workers' transportation costs to and from their place of employment, a minimum wage of \$2 a day, the posting of a bond of compliance by the employer for each contracted worker, and free medical care. According to Cardoso (1979: 25):

The naiveté of the framers of the model contract is striking... No political jurisdiction in the United States provided, by law, any of the work guarantees for agricultural workers. It is doubtful that more than a handful of employers would have considered the extension of these benefits to *braceros*.

Nor would many in the future.

One of the most detailed accounts of the second United States-Mexico Bracero Program (1942-1964) can be found in Kirstein (1977). Despite the fact that this period was characterized by constant suspensions, negotiations, and new agreements, the 1942 agreement formed the basis of all subsequent ones (Majka and Majka 1982) and quite possibly of those between Canada and Mexico as well.

The 1942 agreement included four general provisions. First, *braceros* were exempt from military service. Because their exemption was unclear in the first United States-Mexico agreement (1917-1921), some *braceros* were actually drafted into the American armed forces (Cardoso 1979). Second, *braceros* were to be guaranteed "non-discriminatory treatment" in the United States. Ironically, this provision only applied to employment in the defence industries and government, not in agriculture (Kirstein 1977). Third, return transportation to Mexico was to be provided by the employer nation to ensure that *braceros* were not stranded in the United States as they had been during the 1930s (Kiser and Kiser 1979). Fourth, *braceros* could only be employed where there were certified labour shortages, that is, they could not be competitively hired to depress domestic wages. This provision is probably one of the most difficult to enforce. Evidence from the United States seems to indicate that "Rises in farm labour wages were inversely related to the percentage of *braceros* employed in a particular region" (Majka and Majka 1982: 141).

The 1942 agreement further included several specific provisions with regard to wages and employment. First, *braceros* were to be paid either minimum wage or the prevailing wage offered to domestic workers. Second, *braceros* could only engage in agricultural work unless either the worker or his government agreed to other types of work. Third, *braceros* were to be guaranteed housing facilities and sanitary and medical services equal to those offered to domestic labour. Fourth, *braceros* were to be guaranteed employment for up to 75 percent of their stay plus a daily subsistence allowance of \$3 for each day they were unemployed. Fifth, *braceros* were to be repatriated to Mexico at the end of their contracts. Finally, 10 percent of the *braceros'* wages was to be forwarded to the Mexican Agricultural Credit Bank for use in development. All of these provisions except the last, which was eventually dropped from the United States-Mexico agreement and has never appeared in the Canada-Mexico agreement, appear in one form or another in the Canada-Mexico agreement.

Lack of compliance with the 1942 agreement on the part of American growers caused the Mexican government to terminate it in 1943, only to reinstate it several months later with several modifications.

Specific reference was now made to Mexican federal labour law with regard to the payment of living expenses and transportation costs and to the repatriation of *braceros* by the employer nation. With regard to wages and employment, the guaranteed minimum wage was replaced by the prevailing domestic wage. The higher of the two is expected in the Canada-Mexico agreement. Both the *bracero* and his government would now have to consent to his employment outside of agriculture. Adequate housing and sanitary and medical services would have to be provided without cost to the *bracero*. Finally, lodging and subsistence would have to be provided without cost even if the *bracero* were unemployed for less than 25 percent of the contract period.

In 1948, the American government chose to withdraw from its role in selecting, contracting, transporting, and protecting *braceros*, allowing employers to enter directly into individual contracts with them instead. The 1948 agreement obviously favoured growers who, although still subject to certain restrictions, no longer had to guarantee *braceros* either a minimum wage or subsistence pay during slack periods. Nor was there any mechanism to ensure employer compliance with the written contract. Majka and Majka (1982) note that, since corporate agriculture had never been capable of managing its own labour supply, the American government had to intervene again in 1951 as Mexican complaints of worker abuse escalated.

The closest the Canadian government has ever come to a "hands off" approach to its foreign seasonal agricultural workers programs was its decision in 1988 to withdraw support from the Commonwealth Caribbean and Mexican liaison services in order to combat the federal deficit (Scholtens 1988). The Canadian government remains responsible, however, for ensuring grower compliance with both bilateral agreements.

Later versions of the standard United States-Mexico contract included a clause to the following effect: "The employer was required to take reasonable precautions to prevent persons engaged in illegal and immoral activities from frequenting the places where workers are employed" (Coalson 1977: 96). Although there is no equivalent clause in either of Canada's binational agreements with the Commonwealth Caribbean or Mexico, growers in both Ontario and Manitoba nonetheless discourage their foreign workers from "socializing with Canadians to any excess" (Bogacz and Forsyth 1990: 22).

In 1974, Mexican President Luis Echeverría (1979: 125) announced the beginning of the new Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and, in 1975, diplomatically explained:

We did not sign a new migrant labour agreement with the Government of the United States because the conditions proposed were not compatible with the interests of Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

And what of the Mexicans themselves? Given that no one to date has conducted a detailed study of the participants in the Canada-Mexico Seasonal

Agricultural Workers Program, the area awaits further investigation. From the information that does exist and on the basis of Durand and Massey's (1992) comparison of thirty-two studies of sending communities in Mexico, a few preliminary words may be said.

Durand and Massey (1992) contend that community studies typical of anthropology cannot sustain generalization to the whole of Mexico on such issues as the effects of past agrarian reforms and present agricultural modernization, the class composition of migrants, their legal and demographic profiles, their strategies of migration, and the economic effects on sending communities. They further contend that these issues are determined by specific community-level factors such as the geographical and politico-economic position of sending communities, the quality and distribution of local resources, the age of the migration stream, and the occupational niche it has established in the receiving country.

With regard to the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, the cap on the number of participants is set at 100 for Manitoba. All are eighteen- to forty-five-year-old males who are underemployed as day labourers, small landholders, or shopkeepers in Mexico (Bohuslaw / 1988a; *WT* 1976b). Because the program is state-regulated, the occupational niche that participants occupy is exclusively in agriculture and, because of its seasonality, the migratory strategy is of necessity either non-recurrent (one time only) or recurrent.

One of the most controversial aspects of migration is its economic effects on sending communities (Durand and Massey 1993; Kearney 1986). Consistent with much of the literature on Mexico (see, for example, Dinerman 1982; Stuart and Kearney 1981; Wiest 1973, 1979), it appears that participants in the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program spend most of their earnings on immediate consumption needs rather than on investment in community development. Durand and Massey (1993) point out, however, that during the early stages of household formation when couples marry and raise families, such expenditures are not uncommon. Given that participants in the program are all younger to middle-aged males, it seems reasonable that most of their earnings appear to be spent on food, clothing, toys, small appliances (TVs, VCRs and stereos), tools, new homes and pickup trucks. "If he stops going to Manitoba," one woman said of her husband, "I don't know what we will do to clothe the children" (Bohuslawsky 1988a: 53).

Many factors, however, are still uncertain. The effects of agrarian reform and modernization on the sending communities, their geographical and politico-economic position within Mexico, the quality and distribution of local resources, and the age of the migration stream have yet to be documented. I did discover, however, that the Mexican government appears to be tapping not only those states such as Morelos and Guanajuato that have a long history of migration but also those such as Puebla and Tlaxcala that do not (Cockcroft 1983). This suggests that in

some cases the age of the migration stream is relatively new. It also suggests that the economic conditions in some sending communities are deteriorating. If the response to the NAFTA by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Chiapas was any indication, the Mexican Government's National Program for Modernization of the Countryside (1990-1994), which included "removing at least two-thirds of the farmers from the land, elimination of all government subsidies to farmers, cutting back on the role of the central marketing board... encouraging agribusiness expansion and opening up agricultural land to corporate and foreign ownership" (Warnock 1993: 25), has backfired. Regardless of what occurs in Mexico, the immediate future of southern Manitoba's aboriginal peoples appears to be one of continuing to supply cheap labour to white farmers.

### **The Future of Manitoba Commercial Market Gardening**

#### *Under the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement*

The future of commercial market gardening in Manitoba and indeed in most of Canada is at best uncertain. What is more certain are the effects on the industry that various neo-liberal trade policies have had or will have in the future. When it came into effect in 1989, the CUSTA, for example, was alleged to have caused some processing plants in Canada to shut down and to have undercut the regulatory power of marketing boards.

The United States had two main reasons for including agriculture in its free trade agreement with Canada. The first was to set a precedent for future General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations by eliminating tariffs between two industrialized nations; the second, to expand the market for its agricultural exports to Canada. Canada, too, hoped to gain greater access to the United States for its own agricultural exports but was reluctant to sacrifice its traditional agricultural support programs, especially since the United States was opposed to sacrificing its own.

Those producer groups who supply the export market with wheat, cattle and hogs were initially supportive of the CUSTA because it represented an opportunity to "get government off their backs." Others, including commercial market gardeners who mainly supply the domestic market, were skeptical and with good reason. A preliminary report on the liberalization of agricultural trade warned that

If absolute free trade meant that Canada must abandon its supply management programs... marketing boards... and production support, Canadian agriculture could experience a period of instability which could be very damaging both for producers and for the economy of our country (Frechette 1987: 4, 6).

The real problem, however, was reported to lie with the food processing industry which, as tariffs are lowered and eventually eliminated, might turn to American suppliers. Lower costs of production, greater economies of scale, and a longer growing season in the United States could edge Canadian produce out of the market. In conclusion, the report hinted

that, because Canadian agriculture is largely government-regulated, the CUSTA "could necessitate greater concessions on this side of the border" (Frechette 1987: 11).

What did this mean in concrete terms for commercial market gardeners? Over a period of ten years, all seasonal tariffs on fruit and vegetables and all duties on potatoes and onions would be removed. Under special conditions, such as the dumping of American surplus in Canada, a temporary snapback clause allowed for the reimposition of tariffs (Agriculture Canada 1988). Warnock (1988: 209) explains what the snapback clause actually entails:

[Tariffs] can be reimposed only after five working days and after 48 hours of consultations, and only if prices were below 90% of those in 1987 and there had been no increase in acreage planted.

Farm leaders agreed that, by the time the snapback clause were to come into effect, the market for their produce would be permanently broken.

Although no specific mention was made of Manitoba, the Agriculture Canada report (1988) predicted that the fresh market, processing, and seed potato sectors would remain competitive with those of the United States. The fresh market for carrots, onions, sweet corn, greenhouse cucumbers and cole crops such as cabbage, broccoli, brussel sprouts and cauliflower would also benefit from tariff reduction. Not so the fresh market for tomatoes and celery, nor the processing market for carrots, celery, corn, tomatoes and pickling cucumbers. Both of these markets would be "adversely affected" by competition from American producers. Finally, as if to reassure those growers who hoped to expand their fresh market in the United States, the report stated: "The open border concept only allows for spot checks, no more burdensome than that used by the United States for its own goods" (Agriculture Canada 1988: 39).

The first and most unexpected blow to Manitoba commercial market gardeners was the announcement in August 1989 that, as a result of the CUSTA, Campbell's Soup in Portage la Prairie would close its doors in January 1991 and consolidate its operations in Toronto. Besides the 168 plant workers who would lose their jobs, an estimated 273 truckers and nine local market gardeners would also be affected (Argan 1989: 3). Much of the celery and carrot production and a lesser amount of the cooking onion, rutabaga and potato production in Manitoba had gone to supplying Campbell's. One onion supplier in Portage la Prairie claimed that he stood to lose between \$20,000 and \$30,000 annually because of the closure, but his loss would not be a major one compared to others whose acreages and storage facilities were almost entirely based on contracts with Campbell's (Robson 1989: 2). One carrot and celery supplier claimed he stood to lose \$160,000 a year. Another had recently built a \$250,000 shed to store his contracted produce (Friesen 1989: 9). Both the VGAM and the marketing board played down the closure, calling it a major disappointment but not that serious. Growers, they said, could find other markets,

plant different crops, or simply reduce their acreage (Friesen 1989: 1). Critics of the closure remained cautiously optimistic that McCain and Carnation, the two other major processing plants, would remain in Manitoba.

The second major setback that commercial market gardeners faced as a result of the CUSTA was the arbitrary imposition of non-tariff barriers on Manitoba produce entering the United States. Despite Agriculture Canada's assurances that an open border would mean minimal spot checks, United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) inspectors had been delaying shipments at the unloading point in Minneapolis for three to four times longer than was necessary, checking not the recommended 1 or 2 percent but 15 percent of all shipments for pesticide residue. Ironically, due to differences in pesticide legislation, 20 percent more active ingredients are registered for use and over seven times as many pesticide products are on the market in the United States than in Canada (Shrybman 1992: 43). While no pesticide residue has ever been found on Manitoba produce, the USFDA takes two working days to determine whether or not tests are necessary and an additional fourteen to carry them out. As a result, two separate shipments of cauliflower, each held for two weeks in 1989 and 1990, and three of carrots, each held for almost a week in 1990 and 1991, all spoiled (Friesen 1991: 1).

The only good news that commercial market gardeners appear to have received was a recommendation to Employment and Immigration Canada (1992) that, due to the ongoing problem of attracting and retaining local labour, the Canada-Commonwealth Caribbean and the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programs should not be curtailed in those provinces (Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba and Nova Scotia) where they were most needed.

#### *Under the North American Free Trade Agreement*

As if the CUSTA had not caused enough complications for Manitoba commercial market gardeners, the Canadian government subsequently took part in fast-track negotiations for a trilateral free trade agreement (NAFTA) between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The potential economic benefits of the NAFTA were immediately lauded by *Business Week* (cited in MC 1990: 4): "Greater economies of scale, access to labour, and free movement of capital will help everyone in the long run."

Disillusioned by the CUSTA, many farmers remained skeptical. At the heart of the issue was the possibility that both the NAFTA and the GATT, which superseded the NAFTA, would hasten the trend toward vertical integration and concentration of ownership of Canada's food system by a few large, mainly American, multinational corporations.

As if to reassure farmers that this would not happen, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal (hereafter CITT) (1991) provided a selected list of both new investments and plant shutdowns in the food processing

industry since 1989. McCain, for example, opened a new plant in Prince Edward Island in 1991 at a cost of \$36 million. Between 1989 and 1991, Campbell's invested a total of \$23.5 million to upgrade and expand various of its production facilities but, of course, had closed its Portage la Prairie plant. Producers in Ontario were the hardest hit when no less than six processing plants closed their doors between 1989 and 1991.

Farm organizations were quick to point out that, under the NAFTA, agribusiness corporations lured by cheap land and labour, good climate, and few pesticide regulations would continue to establish large commercial operations not only in the southern United States but in Mexico as well. Commented Wayne Easter, president of the National Farmers Union: "The potential damage to Canada's processing capabilities is enormous" (MC 1991: 12).

Of more immediate concern to farmers, however, was the fear that the horticultural industry would not survive the end of tariffication which, under the NAFTA, would occur immediately or in five years for some products, not ten for all products as agreed under the CUSTA (*Union Farmer* 1992: 1). Until 1994, tariffs had prevented countries such as the United States and Mexico from dumping surplus produce at depressed prices in Canada. In the absence of import controls, "dumping is a very effective strategy to gain market share and eliminate the competition" (Arsenault 1992: 9). Since there seemed to be little "snap" in the snapback clause to prevent dumping, it was predicted that few growers would be confident enough to expand their operations in the future (Binkley 1991).

Closely related to the problem of dumping was that of permissible levels of pesticide residue and bacteria in food. Traditionally, Canada's regulatory standards have been more stringent than those of either the United States or Mexico. Under the NAFTA, however, each country is allowed to establish its own standards on the basis of cost effectiveness and the onus is on the country of import to prove that a product poses a risk to human health (Arsenault 1992).

The CITT (1991) report was all but silent on most of these issues. It did predict that, under the NAFTA, the United States would remain Canada's major competitor in the fresh and processed fruit and vegetable industry since transportation costs would impede the entry of Mexican produce into Canada. It further predicted that Canada would increase its own market share of the same in Mexico. How transportation costs might be cheaper for Canadian than for Mexican growers was not explained. Obviously, "[greater] distances involved in transporting commodities must be factored into the final cost to consumers" (Pugh 1992: 8, 10).

To date, the NAFTA has had little impact, positive or negative, on Canadian agriculture. This lack of immediate impact was due to the fact that agricultural trade was treated as a bilateral, not a trilateral, issue between countries. In the case of Canada and the United States, which remains its largest trading partner, the CUSTA continues to dictate agricultural trade.

In fact, the partners to that agreement are still trying to resolve bitter disputes that arose over the supply-managed tariffs on dairy, poultry and egg products, the practices of the Canadian Wheat Board, and border inspections on meat. With regard to the impact of the NAFTA on Canadian horticulture, the executive vice-president of the CHC commented:

When 80 to 85 percent of Canadian consumption of fruits and vegetables comes from the U.S., and 75 to 80 percent of our exports go to the U.S., it's hard to get worked up about [Mexico] (Tower 1994: 18).

On the positive side for Manitoba commercial market gardening, both McCain in Portage la Prairie and Midwest Food Products (formerly Carnation) in Carberry recently announced plans for expansion — \$55.9 million and \$20 million respectively — due to growing global markets for potato products. The McCain expansion would not proceed without some cost to the public. Not only did the federal, provincial, and local governments finance a \$15 million upgrade of Portage la Prairie's wastewater treatment plant to handle the increase in effluent from McCain but the federal and provincial governments also contributed \$3 million toward the installation of an irrigation system (the cost of which had more than doubled from \$650 an acre in 1991 to \$1,400 an acre in 1997) to accommodate McCain's need for an additional 17,000 acres of potatoes.

Even the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board took a small risk and called for three or four more growers to supply it with fifteen new summer crops, including butterhead lettuce, bok choy cabbage, dillweed, leeks, endive and escarole lettuce, flowering kale, garlic, watermelons and cantaloupe (Friesen 1995:10).

On the negative side, the USFDA continues to impound shipments of Manitoba produce at the Canada-United States border. Again in 1995, three separate truckloads of vegetables were delayed for three, fourteen, and fifteen days respectively, while USFDA officials tested for pesticide residue. Manitoba commercial market gardeners were furious. "They're just holding stuff up for ... very little apparent reason," said one. "It's supposed to be free trade ... but I don't know in whose favour" (Kusch 1992: 12). "The only alternative," said another, "would be to seize *their* loads" (Zielinski 1995: 9, emphasis added).

As to the future of the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, one can only speculate. Labour mobility was not included in the NAFTA negotiations. The "official" reason for its exclusion was that Mexico would prefer to create jobs rather than export people. The "unofficial" reason was that, if the contentious issue of labour mobility (particularly from Mexico to the United States) had been included, negotiations would have come to a virtual standstill (Castañeda and Alarcón 1992). As former American trade representative, Carla Hills, stated: "We're negotiating a *trade* agreement" and nothing more (cited in McGaughey 1992: 35, emphasis added). Privately, however, former Mexican President Salinas

had been using the threat of massive Mexican migration to both the United States and Canada (Alvarez and Mendoza 1992; Muñoz 1993) as a weapon in NAFTA negotiations.

General consensus has it that in the short term the NAFTA will increase Mexican migration to the United States. Opinion varies, however, as to the long-term effect of the NAFTA on such movement. On the one hand, it is argued that if Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León moves ahead with Salinas' agricultural reforms, including the privatization of *ejidos* (the post-revolutionary form of land tenure that grants use-rights to agrarian farm communities), the long-term effect of the NAFTA will be the permanent displacement of an estimated 850,000 heads of peasant households (McGaughey 1992: 8) and a corresponding increase in migration to the United States. On the other hand, it is argued that the long-term effect of the NAFTA will be the creation of employment opportunities in Mexico, especially in the *maquiladora* (a labour-intensive assembly plant which is established in free-trade zones) sector, and a corresponding decrease in migration to the United States:

In fact, both the Mexican and the U.S. governments appear to be counting on the employment created as a result of the NAFTA to help stem the flow of Mexican workers to the United States (Young 1992: 98).<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not the *maquiladora* sector can do this is uncertain. In 1992, the population of Mexico was 86 million. Between 50 and 60 percent of the economically-active population was either un- or underemployed (Alvarez and Mendoza 1992; Grinspan and Cameron 1993). By 1993, the *maquiladora* sector had employed no more than 500,000 people and, by 1996, no more than 800,000 (Barkin and Rosin 1997; Grinspan and Cameron 1993). What, then, are the others to do? Where are they to go?

On the one hand, some could come to Canada. One commercial market gardener expressed the hope that, once the NAFTA was ratified, cheap Mexican labour would flow more freely across the borders. In fact, the CITT report anticipated changes to Canada's foreign seasonal labour programs. Without specifying what these changes might entail, it hinted that:

It is a matter of pride to Canadians that migrant workers are treated very well here, but modest concessions to competitiveness could be made without jeopardizing social justice or the supply of visiting workers (CITT 1991: 25, emphasis added).

On the other hand, an unexpected turn of events could also occur. The Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, one of many groups opposed to the NAFTA, argued that

Cheap labour should be considered as a form of "dumping," like a subsidy to capital, and should be penalized in exchanges (cited in McGaughey 1992: 164-65).

The charge was directed at Mexico's *maquiladora* sector but if the United States were to decide that the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural

Workers Program is a subsidy to Canadian farmers, the program might be terminated. This could be cause for concern since, for all its shortcomings, a government-regulated program is one of the few safeguards against worker abuse. Does Canada want to compete with the United States and Mexico in this arena as well?

#### **Notes**

1. Any deviations from the contract on the part of an employer, such as inadequate housing or irregularities in pay, are rectified by the Canadian government as soon as they come to its attention.
2. In September 1995, the federal government dismantled the AES network as a cost-saving measure. The service was taken over by the CEC, which places the onus of screening and hiring applicants on the individual farmer. There was no word on the future of AES employer-employee contracts.
3. The Mexican government's reliance on the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program as a safety valve for its unemployed must have proved disappointing in the long run since the total number of participants (15,000 as of 1990) has been far fewer than that at the height of the United States-Mexico Bracero Program (460,000 in 1956).
4. Perhaps Canada also counted on the NAFTA to create employment in Mexico for Mexicans. As soon as the NAFTA was ratified, Laotian women, new immigrants to Canada, appeared in the vegetable fields around Portage la Prairie, shuttled from Winnipeg and back by the federal government's Day-Haul Transportation Program.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

**C**anadian agriculture as a whole is undergoing a crisis due to recent neo-liberal trade agreements. Commercial market gardening, however, appears to be experiencing some growth due in part to the use of Canada's Foreign Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programs to solve its alleged labour shortages. The industry's anomalous characteristic of being labour- rather than capital-intensive provided the impetus for this study of the development of Manitoba market gardening and its attendant labour needs. Since the history of Manitoba agriculture shows that its labour force has consisted of groups of workers from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, my main objective was to determine how social relations have manifested themselves in the province's commercial market gardening sector. Four related objectives were to locate Manitoba commercial market gardeners within the class structure of Canada; to examine past and present labour sources with respect to class, race, and ethnicity; to compare and contrast the United States-Mexico Bracero Program and the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program; and to evaluate the future of Manitoba commercial market gardening in light of the CUSTA and the NAFTA.

Throughout this work, I argue for the centrality of class as opposed to race or ethnic relations, since an exclusive emphasis on the latter two obscures the context of production in which social relations have evolved in Manitoba agriculture. I thus identify Manitoba commercial market gardeners not as a status group nor as capitalists but as members of the petty bourgeoisie, that is, those who both own and operate the means of production. And rather than define their labour force as ethnic groups, ethnic categories, racial groups, and racial categories, I identify it by the broader concept of racialized fractions of the working class.

Concentrated at first along river lots, Manitoba market gardening developed slowly due mainly to the West's reliance on wheat as an export crop to support eastern commercial and industrial interests. Not until 1945, when the Manitoba Department of Agriculture began to encourage growers to diversify into special crops and field vegetables in the Pembina Pocket did market gardening achieve commercial status. But diversification did not come without financial risks to growers.

From that point on, market gardening increasingly became subject to certain trends that have come to characterize the whole of Canadian agriculture — a decrease in the number of farms; an increase in their size; an

increase in the value of produce sold; and an increase in farm expenses. These trends are indicative of the cost-price squeeze of long-term crises and of the boom-and-bust cycle of short-term crises that the state has always been reluctant to solve. They also signal the end of what is often assumed by social scientists to have been a homogeneous class of producers and the beginning of small, medium and large class fractions of the petty bourgeoisie divided along economic, political and ideological lines.

Many small market gardeners, like most small farmers, did not survive the transition to commercial status, yet large market gardeners, at least in Manitoba, are rare. Those who did survive were mainly medium producers, all owners and operators of the means of production, but their consolidation as a class fraction of the petty bourgeoisie has been a struggle.

Initial attempts by market gardeners at co-operative marketing, as pioneered by the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association in the early 1900s, could not achieve the control over supply that was needed to weather the boom-and-bust cycle of agriculture. Later attempts to organize market gardeners under a compulsory marketing commission were also blocked by small growers who not only resented government interference in the sphere of exchange but also feared the loss of their livelihood due to the costs of such a strategy. Not until 1972 did the lobbying efforts of the VGAM, composed mainly of medium producers, result in the formation of a producer-controlled marketing board.

Their struggle did not end there, however. Machinery and chemical suppliers, wholesalers and retailers, and food processors all control both input and output markets, leaving medium producers extremely vulnerable to the cost-price squeeze. Apart from a government-regulated marketing board to protect their largely regional market, Manitoba commercial market gardeners have control over little else than the cost of labour.

Historically, the sources of Manitoba farm labour have formed, willingly or unwillingly, part of a floating surplus population drawn into and expelled from agriculture on a seasonal basis. Many are what I have termed racialized fractions of the working class. Aboriginal Canadians, Japanese, Mexican Mennonites, and Mexicans have had little say in their incorporation into production relations in Manitoba agriculture and, with few exceptions, have seldom organized themselves in opposition to growers. This comes as no surprise since the petty bourgeoisie, backed by certain state-sanctioned privileges, are far more cohesive than farm workers have ever been. Typically, farm labour has formed a class in itself rather than a class for itself.

Of particular interest is the conflicting role that the ideology of racism has played during times of absolute and relative labour shortages in Manitoba agriculture. During World War II, the Japanese were incorporated into sugar beet work by the state through the suspension of normal labour market mechanisms, yet Manitoba growers were so pleased with these "enemy aliens" that they agreed to honour their contract demands.

Aboriginal Canadians, who were denied the right to make a living as farmers, were also mobilized by the state during World War II and actually commanded a higher wage than did non-aboriginal farm workers.

This leads directly to the question of how a formerly satisfactory group of farm workers can suddenly become unsatisfactory in the eyes of growers. I refer specifically to two examples. During times of economic expansion, Mexican Mennonites are welcomed by their Manitoba brethren as indispensable labourers but, during times of economic recession, are criticized as "backward" and "dirty." Similarly, during the crisis of war, aboriginal Canadians were preferred by Manitoba farmers but later were considered "lazy" and "unreliable" and were replaced by Mexican migrants. Regardless of whether labour shortages in agriculture are absolute or relative, the state has the power to identify such racialized class fractions and to mobilize them into farm work. However, it is during times of relative, not absolute, labour shortages that racism seems more likely to be directed against such class fractions.

In the context of the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, racism directed at foreign workers by domestic workers, a phenomenon documented in much of the social science literature, did not occur in Manitoba. Rather, aboriginal workers became the object of racism by their employers and, in response, organized into the Manitoba Farm Workers Association, in opposition not to Mexicans but to growers whose employment practices it considered unfair. What had the potential to become an interethnic conflict between aboriginal Canadians and Mexicans thus became a class conflict between petty bourgeois producers and the racialized class fraction of Indian labourers.

The result of this conflict was influenced by many factors, not the least of which was that class consciousness did not originate with aboriginal Canadian workers themselves. It was introduced to them from the outside by a labour organizer and was short-lived, in part because their identification with their ethnic heritage and aspirations to self-government may have been stronger than their identification with their role as farm labourers.

Having won the right to import foreign workers under a contract very similar to the former United States-Mexico Bracero Program, Manitoba commercial market gardeners now face more serious challenges from the CUSTA, which are ongoing, and from the NAFTA, which have yet to be determined. In this new global context, the state seems either unable or unwilling to intervene on behalf of Canadian producers. Plant closures such as that of Campbell's, the phasing out of marketing boards under neo-liberal trade agreements, non-tariff barriers to exports in the form of USFDA border inspections of Manitoba produce, and the threat of agribusiness competition from the United States and Mexico threaten the survival of the medium petty bourgeoisie.

While the Canadian government may be willing to make certain modifications to the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program to

increase growers' ability to compete in the global marketplace, it is not at all certain that such modifications will not be contested by the United States as an unfair subsidy to Canadian agriculture. Manitoba commercial market gardeners have discovered that "free trade" and "fair trade" are not necessarily the same thing.

Many questions remain unanswered, some due to the political sensitivity of the issue of Mexican labour in Manitoba, others to the fact that there simply are no easy answers. Are farmers' labour shortages a result of their unwillingness to pay higher wages or of their inability to do so, or both? Since Manitoba's cap of 100 Mexican workers has never been met, do growers really need these workers or could the positions be filled by domestic labourers? Do Mexicans actually displace domestic labour or do they create more jobs than they take away? Are there as many farm workers available from Manitoba's reserves as the MFWA claimed or was the number exaggerated for political reasons? Is the state willing to address the underlying problem of poverty on reserves? What will be the long-term effects of the NAFTA on both Canada's horticultural industry and Mexico's reliance on out-migration of its surplus labour force to solve its economic problems? If there is another labour dispute, would the MFWA reorganize or would the conflict become interethnic? These and other questions form the basis of future research.

## **APPENDICES**

# APPENDIX A

## EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE AGREEMENT

AGREEMENT entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_.

BETWEEN:

\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
(herein referred to as  
the "EMPLOYER")  
and  
\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
(herein referred to as  
the "EMPLOYEE")

WITNESSED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The EMPLOYER hires the EMPLOYEE to work for the EMPLOYER as a Farm Labourer upon the following terms, which are hereby agreed to by the EMPLOYEE.
  2. The term of employment shall commence on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_ and it is expected that the period of work will extend to \_\_\_\_\_ days per week. Normal working hours are from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ days per week. Overtime pay will be at the rate of \_\_\_\_\_ per hour.
  3. Wages will be \$\_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_ (hour, day, week, month).
  4. Deductions from wages will be made for Canada Pension Plan, Unemployment Insurance and Income Tax. Wages will be paid \_\_\_\_\_ (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly). A statement of earnings and deductions shall be issued with each pay.
  5. Accommodations supplied shall consist of \_\_\_\_\_ which is valued at \$\_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_ (week, month). Telephone, hydro and fuel are to be paid by \_\_\_\_\_. Any accommodation provided to the EMPLOYEE shall meet the standards established by the CANADA/MANITOBA Agricultural Employment Committee.
  6. Room and board will be supplied at \$\_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_ (day, week, month). The employer is responsible for regular maintenance such as plumbing, heating and shingles, but not for damage inflicted by the employee. The employee must maintain accommodations in the same condition as received.
  7. Time off will amount to \_\_\_\_\_ day(s) per week and should be taken every \_\_\_\_\_ (week, second week, month, etc.)
  8. Paid employee vacations will be provided on the basis of \_\_\_\_\_ days for each full year of service, or at a rate of \_\_\_\_\_ per cent of salary or wages earned.
  9. Statutory holidays with pay include: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Others: \_\_\_\_\_.
  10. Workers Compensation is provided. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
  11. Each party agrees to provide the other with \_\_\_\_\_ days notice of intent to terminate employment.
  12. The EMPLOYER may terminate this agreement at any time by reason of the EMPLOYER's dissipation, violation of instructions or rules of the EMPLOYER, or failure to comply with any of the agreements on the part of the EMPLOYEE as herein set out.
  13. The EMPLOYEE shall be diligent, follow instructions, and will handle with care all machinery, livestock and crops given to his charge.
  14. In the event of the death or total incapacity of either party, or if the EMPLOYER ceases to carry on the business, or become bankrupt, this agreement shall forthwith terminate. In the event of the sickness of the EMPLOYEE, or other cause incapacitating him from performing the duties prescribed or referred to herein, or from attending to his duties, for \_\_\_\_\_ consecutive days, the EMPLOYER may terminate this agreement, without notice, upon payment to the EMPLOYEE of \_\_\_\_\_ dollars in lieu of notice, in addition to all arrears of wages when ascertained up to the date of such termination.
  15. Nothing in this agreement shall be taken to create any liability by the AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICES for or in respect of any matter arising herein.



AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT  
SERVICES

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_.

EMPLOYEE \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYER \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX B

## HUMAN RESOURCE FORECAST Anticipated Occupational Shortage

OCCUPATIONAL TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

WAGES:

Hourly Rate: \_\_\_\_\_  
Piecework Rate: \_\_\_\_\_  
Housing and Transportation Allowance: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Overtime Premium: \_\_\_\_\_  
7th Day Premium: \_\_\_\_\_  
Vacation Pay Rate: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

WORKING CONDITIONS:

Hours Per Day: \_\_\_\_\_  
Days Per Week: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hours of Work Between: \_\_\_\_\_  
Average Weekly Hours: \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of Housing Provided: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Board/Meal Charge: (Up to \$6.50 per day for a minimum of three meals)  
Guaranteed Minimum Hours per Day if Worker Assembles at Marshalling Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
Washing and Bathing Facilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
Toilet Facilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
Coffee and Lunch Breaks: \_\_\_\_\_  
Provision of Working Supplies: (i.e. Gloves, Rubbers, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMPLOYER'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CERTIFICATION: The wages and working conditions offered are/are not sufficient to attract and retain in employment, Canadian citizens or permanent residents.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ AES OFFICER: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ CEC OFFICER: \_\_\_\_\_

HUMAN RESOURCE FORECAST/PLAN  
Anticipated Occupational Shortage

OCCUPATIONAL TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

DURATION AND EXTENT OF SHORTAGE:

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OCCUPATION TASK DESCRIPTION:

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CONSEQUENCES IF SHORTAGE NOT FILLED OR ADDRESSED:

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METHODS OF FILLING/ADDRESSING SHORTAGE - SHORT TERM:

- Recruitment (CEC/NJB/Relocation) \_\_\_\_\_  

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- Training: \_\_\_\_\_  

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- Contracting Out: \_\_\_\_\_  

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- Reassignment of Tasks: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Mechanical Substitution: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Foreign Worker Recruitment: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

METHODS OF FILLING/ADDRESSING SHORTAGE - LONG TERM:

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DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMPLOYER'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

**CERTIFICATION:** If the employer is requesting permission to recruit Foreign Workers to solve all or part of the identified occupational shortage as a short term solution, then has the employer made reasonable efforts to hire or train Canadian citizens or permanent residents for the employment in question?

Reasonable Effort Made \_\_\_\_\_ Not Made \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ AES OFFICER: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ CEC OFFICER: \_\_\_\_\_

**AUTHORIZATION:** Given that the following conditions are met, the employer will be allowed to recruit Foreign Worker to a maximum of \_\_\_\_\_

Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ AUTHORIZING OFFICER: \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Authorizing officer is as follows:  
1 - 9 Foreign Workers - CEC Officer  
10 - 49 Foreign Workers - RHO Officer)

# APPENDIX C

## AGREEMENT FOR THE EMPLOYMENT IN CANADA OF SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS FROM MEXICO

WHEREAS the Government of Canada and the Government of the United Mexican States are desirous that employment of a seasonal nature be arranged for Mexican Agricultural Workers in Canada where Canada desires that such workers are needed to satisfy the requirements of the Canadian agricultural labour market; and,

WHEREAS the Government of Canada and the Government of the United Mexican States have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to give effect to this joint desire; and,

WHEREAS the Government of Canada and the Government of the United Mexican States agree that an Agreement for the Employment in Canada of seasonal agricultural workers from Mexico be signed by each participating employer and worker; and,

WHEREAS the Government of Canada and the Government of the United Mexican States agree that an agent for the Government of the United Mexican States known as the "GOVERNMENT'S AGENT" shall be stationed in Canada to assist in the administration of the program;

THEREFORE, the following agreement for the employment in Canada of seasonal agricultural workers from Mexico is made in duplicate this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_.

The EMPLOYER agrees to employ the WORKER(S) assigned to him by the Government of the United Mexican States under the Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and to accept the terms and conditions hereunder as forming part of the employment Agreement between himself and such referred WORKER.

### THE PARTIES agree as follows:

1. (a) Subject to compliance with the terms and the conditions found in this agreement, the EMPLOYER agrees to hire the WORKER as \_\_\_\_\_ for a term of employment not less than six weeks with the expected

completion of the period of employment to be the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_.

(b) In the case of a TRANSFERRED WORKER, the term of employment shall consist of a cumulative term of not less than six weeks.

2. The normal working day is not to exceed eight hours, but the EMPLOYER may agree to extend his / her hours when the urgency of the situation requires it, and such extension shall be in accordance with the customs of the district and the spirit of this program, giving the same rights as those given to Canadian workers.

3. For each consecutive days of work, the WORKER will be entitled to one day of rest, but the EMPLOYER may request that the WORKER and the WORKER may agree to have that day postponed until a day determined by mutual agreement where the urgency to finish farm work causes be delayed.

4. The EMPLOYER shall give the WORKER a trial period of fourteen actual working days from the date of his arrival at the place of employment. The EMPLOYER shall not discharge the WORKER except for sufficient cause or refuse to work during that trial period.

5. The EMPLOYER shall, upon requesting the transfer of a WORKER, give a trial period of seven actual working days from the date of his arrival at the place of employment. Effective the eighth working day, such a WORKER shall be deemed to be a "transferred WORKER" and clause IV 1. (i) will apply.

### II The EMPLOYER also agrees:

#### WAGES:

1. (a) To pay the WORKER at his place of employment weekly wages in lawful money of Canada at a rate equal to:
  - (i) the minimum wage for industrial workers provided by law in the province in which the WORKER is employed;
  - (ii) the rate determined from time to time by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission to be the prevailing wage rate for the type of agricultural work being carried out by the WORKER in the locality in which the work will be done;
  - (iii) the rate being paid by the EMPLOYER to his Canadian workers performing the same type of agricultural work; whichever is the greater, provided:
  - (iv) that the average minimum weekly wage shall be 40 hours;
  - (v) that in circumstances of proven fulfillment of Clause II (4)(b), the average weekly income paid to the WORKER over the period of employment is to be not less than an amount equal to a 40 hour week at the hourly minimum rate for industrial workers provided by law in the province, and
  - (vi) that where, for any reason whatsoever, no actual work is possible, the WORKER shall receive a reasonable advance to cover his personal expenses.
- (b) to make deductions from the wages payable to the WORKER only for the following:
  - (i) those employee deductions required to be made under law;
  - (ii) all other deductions as required pursuant to this agreement.
- (c) to pay the WORKER vacation pay in accordance with provincial legislation governing terms of employment in the province in which the WORKER is employed.

#### CONDITIONS

2. (a) to provide such adequate living accommodations to the WORKER, without cost to him, as meet the approval of the appropriate official of the governmental authority responsible for health and living conditions in the province where the WORKER is employed and, in the absence of such authority, the approval of the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT;
- (b) to provide reasonable and proper food to the WORKER and to furnish cooking utensils;
- (c) to comply with all laws, regulations and by-laws respecting conditions set by competent authority and, in addition, in the absence of any law providing for payment of compensation to workers for personal injuries received or disabilities resulting from the course of the employment, shall obtain insurance accepted by the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT, providing necessary compensation to the WORKER;
- (d) to maintain and forward to the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT, a record and make attendance and pay records, together with such rules of conduct and discipline as may be required to observe;
- (e) that the WORKER shall not be allowed to assume any or place of employment or transferred or loaned to another employer without the consent of the WORKER and the prior approval in writing of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT;

#### TRAVEL

3. (a) to pay in advance to the EMPLOYER'S travel agent the cost of air transportation of the WORKER for travel to Canada and return to Mexico
- (b) to make arrangements:
  - (i) to meet and transport the WORKER from his point of arrival in Canada to his place of employment and, upon termination of his employment;
  - (ii) to transport the WORKER to his place of departure from Canada, and
  - (iii) to inform and obtain the consent of the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT to the transportation arrangements required in (i) above.

**III The WORKER also agrees:**

**EMPLOYMENT**

1. (a) to work and reside at the place of employment or at such other place as the EMPLOYER, with the approval of the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT  
 (i) may require;  
 (ii) the EMPLOYER may deduct from the WORKER'S wages a sum not to exceed \$4.50 per day for the cost of meals provided to the WORKER;  
 (iii) to work at all times during the terms of employment under the supervision and direction of the EMPLOYER and perform the duties of the agricultural work required of him;  
 (iv) to abide by all rules set down by the EMPLOYER which have been approved by the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT relating to the safety, discipline, and the care and maintenance of property;  
 (v) that he shall:  
 (i) maintain living quarters furnished to him by the EMPLOYER or his agent in the same class condition in which he received them;  
 (ii) if he fails to keep the living quarters in a clean condition by reason that the EMPLOYER may, with the approval of the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT, deduct from his wages the cost to the EMPLOYER to maintain the quarters in the appropriate state of cleanliness;  
 (vi) that he shall not work for any other person without the approval of the EMPLOYER, except in situations arising by reason of the EMPLOYER'S breach of this agreement and where alternative arrangements for employment are made under clause IV; 4;  
 (vii) To return promptly to Mexico upon completion of his/her authorized work period.

**TRAVEL**

2. To pay to the EMPLOYER an amount of transportation costs referred to in clause II (a) by way of regular payroll deductions a sum calculated at a rate of 2 percent of the WORKER'S gross pay, the aggregate payment not to be less than \$10.00 or greater than \$164.00.

**IV THE PARTIES further agree:**

1. That if, during the course of the trial period of employment by the WORKER, the EMPLOYER, after consultation with the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT, should be entitled for reasonable cause to refuse to work, or any other sufficient reason, to terminate the WORKER'S employment hereunder and to cause the WORKER to be repatriated; and where

(i) the WORKER was repatriated by name by the EMPLOYER, the full cost of such repatriation to

Mexico shall be paid by the EMPLOYER;

- (ii) the WORKER was selected by the Government of Mexico and less than 50% of the term of the contract has been completed, the full cost of returning the WORKER will be the responsibility of the WORKER;  
 (iii) the WORKER was selected by the Government of Mexico and less than 50% of the term of the contract has been completed, the cost of the north-bound and south-bound flight will be the responsibility of the WORKER. In the event of insolvency of the WORKER, the Government of Mexico, through the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT will reimburse the EMPLOYER for the unpaid amount less any amounts collected under clause III;

2. That if, in the opinion of the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT, special personal or domestic circumstances exist which make repatriation of the WORKER desirable or necessary prior to the termination of the agreement, the EMPLOYER:

- (i) shall be responsible for the full cost of repatriation to \_\_\_\_\_, Mexico, if 50% or more of the term of the agreement has been completed but less than 100%;  
 (ii) shall not be responsible for any cost of repatriation where less than 50% of the term of the agreement has been completed.

3. That if, prior to the termination of the contract, repatriation of the WORKER for medical reasons is necessary, the EMPLOYER shall pay the reasonable transportation and subsistence expenses of the WORKER with respect to repatriation to

Mexico except in the instances where repatriation is necessary due to a physical

4. medical condition which was present prior to the WORKER leaving Mexico;

5. That if it is determined by the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT, after consultation with the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, that the EMPLOYER has not satisfied his obligations under this agreement, the agreement will be terminated by the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT on behalf of the WORKER, and if alternative agricultural employment cannot be arranged through the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission for the WORKER in that area of Canada, the EMPLOYER shall be responsible for the full costs of repatriation of the WORKER to

Mexico; and if the term of employment as specified in Clause I-1, is not completed and employment is terminated under Clause IV A, the WORKER shall receive from the EMPLOYER a payment to ensure that the total wages paid to the WORKER is not less than that which the WORKER would have received if the minimum period of employment had been completed.

3. That if the WORKER dies during the period of employment, the EMPLOYER shall notify the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT and upon the instructions of the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT, either

- (i) remit to the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT a sum of money which shall represent the sum that the EMPLOYER would have incurred under 3 (i) above, in order that such amounts be applied to the sum undertaken by the Government of Mexico in having the WORKER returned to his relatives in Mexico.

6. That if a transferred WORKER is not suitable to perform the duties assigned by the receiving EMPLOYER, within the seven days trial period the EMPLOYER shall return the WORKER to the previous EMPLOYER and that EMPLOYER will be responsible for the repatriation cost of the WORKER.

**FINANCIAL UNDERTAKINGS**

7. That if the WORKER is to borrow money from the EMPLOYER:

- (i) no loan from the EMPLOYER to the WORKER shall be for a sum that exceeds one month's wages; and  
 (ii) if the WORKER does not repay the loan to the EMPLOYER prior to the termination of the contract, the EMPLOYER must request such payment in writing from the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT within a period of one month after termination of the contract, or three months where the WORKER returned before the agreed date for termination of employment; and  
 (iii) if a proper request is made within the appropriate time, the GOVERNMENT'S AGENT will reimburse the EMPLOYER within a reasonable time.

8. (a) The WORKER agrees that the EMPLOYER shall recover by way of regular payroll deductions the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ per day until the date of departure to Mexico. Such deduction will cover the premium for non-occupational medical insurance which includes hospitalization, medical treatment, dental treatment and medical services provided for comparable coverage.

- (b) That the WORKER agrees that the EMPLOYER shall remain in directivity to the insurance company engaged by the Government of Mexico for the total amount of the insurance premium calculated for the stay period in Canada. Such amount will be recovered by the EMPLOYER with the deduction made to the WORKER'S wages according to clause IV 8 (a). In the case where the WORKER leaves Canada prior to the end of the agreement has expired, the EMPLOYER will be entitled to recover any unused portion of the insurance premium from the insurance company.

- (c) The coverage for insurance shall include:  
 (i) the expenses for non-occupational medical insurance which includes accident, sickness, hospitalization and dental benefits;  
 (ii) any other expenses that might be looked upon under the agreement between the Government of Mexico and the insurance company to be the benefits of the WORKER.

- (d) In the event of fire, the EMPLOYER'S responsibility for the WORKER'S personal clothing shall be limited to 1/3 its replacement cost to a maximum of \$150.00. The government of Mexico shall bear responsibility for the remaining cost of the replacement of the WORKER'S clothing.

9. That the agreement shall be governed by the laws of Canada.

EMPLOYER'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF EMPLOYER: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CORPORATE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OF WORKER IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA AND  
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES  
CONCERNING THE  
MEXICAN SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS PROGRAM**

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA (hereinafter referred to as "Canada") as represented by the Minister of Employment and Immigration

and

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES (hereinafter referred to as "Mexico") as represented by the Secretary of External Relations

Desiring to continue to develop the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program which has been in existence since 1974 and which symbolizes the close bonds of friendship, understanding and cooperation existing between them; and

Desiring to ensure that the Program continues to be of mutual benefit to both parties and facilitates the movement of Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers into all areas of Canada where Canada determines that such workers are needed to satisfy the requirements of the Canadian agricultural labour market;

Canada and Mexico have agreed that the guiding principles underlying the Program will be:

1. (a) that the operation of the program will be administered according to the Operational Guidelines, attached as Annex I which will be subject to annual review by both parties and amended as necessary to reflect changes required for the successful administration of the Program and adherence to the principles contained in this Memorandum;
- (b) that workers are to be employed at a premium cost to the employers and are to receive from their respective employers, while engaged in employment in Canada, adequate accommodation and treatment equal to that received by Canadian workers performing the same type of agricultural work, in accordance with Canadian laws;
- (c) that workers are to be employed in any activity performed by Canadian workers in the Canadian agricultural sector only during those periods determined by Canada to be periods when workers resident in Canada are not available; and
- (d) that each worker will sign an Employment Agreement attached as Annex II outlining the conditions of employment under the Program, which agreement will be subject to annual review by both parties and amended after consultation with employer groups in Canada to reflect changes required for the successful administration of the Program and adherence to the principles contained in this Memorandum.

And have further agreed that:

2. This Memorandum of Understanding
  - (a) may be amended at any time with the approval in writing of both parties;
  - (b) becomes effective on the later of the dates of signature by representatives of both parties and will be valid for an initial period of three full calendar years and thereafter will continue in force unless terminated by either party giving at least three (3) months notice in writing to the other party after consultation during which at least a three month advance notice has been given; and

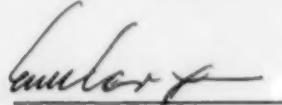
(c) is an intergovernmental administrative arrangement and does not constitute an international treaty and that any differences with regard to the interpretation or application of this Memorandum of Understanding or its attachments will be settled through consultation between both parties.

Done in two copies in the English, French and Spanish languages, each version being equally authoritative.

Signed at Ottawa Signed at Ottawa  
this 3<sup>d</sup> day of February 1987 this 3<sup>d</sup> day of February 1987



Ambassador of Mexico for the  
United Mexican States



Minister of Employment and  
Immigration for Canada

**OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES TO THE MEMORANDUM  
OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN  
THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA  
AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES**

Further to the Principles contained in the Memorandum of Understanding, the parties have agreed that:

1. Canada

- (a) will establish directions, in accordance with its laws respecting immigration, limiting the admission to Canada of WORKERS from Mexico seeking entry to Canada for the purpose of engaging in seasonal employment in the agricultural sector to persons selected by Mexico who:
  - (i) are at least 18 years of age;
  - (ii) are nationals of Mexico;
  - (iii) satisfy the immigration laws of both countries; and
  - (iv) are parties to an Employment Agreement attached hereto as Annex II;
- (b) will endeavour to provide Mexico with a minimum of 10 working days notice as to the number of unnamed WORKERS required by EMPLOYERS from the labour pool referred to in section 2 (d) in order to facilitate the documentation process and enable their arrival by the dates required by the EMPLOYERS;
- (c) will endeavour to notify Mexico as soon as reasonably possible:
  - (i) of the cancellation of any requests for Mexican WORKERS prior to their departure from Mexico; and
  - (ii) of any new request whereby a WORKER whose request has been cancelled would be required, so that in case of short notice cancellation utmost effort will be made to reassign the workers affected;
- (d) through the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City will undertake to review the medical reports and other WORKER documentation, to complete employment authorizations for each WORKER, and to advise Mexico when all documentation is complete.

2. Mexico

- (a) upon receipt of the notice referred to in subclause 1(b), will complete, with the exception of major force clauses, within ten working days the recruitment, selection and documentation of unnamed WORKERS and will notify the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City and the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission through its Government Agent of the number of WORKERS, their names and the dates of arrival in Canada;
- (b) will only select for the Program persons who are bona fide agricultural WORKERS and who have no infections or communicable diseases, or any other physical or medical condition which would adversely impair the WORKER'S ability to satisfactorily perform his assigned job, will arrange a medical examination including chest X-rays for each WORKER, where considered advisable will issue a WORKER with a medical alert card and will provide each WORKER with a suitable Mexican passport;
- (c) will endeavour to deliver the WORKER'S medical report and passport to the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City at least two weeks before the departure of any given WORKER'S flight;

- (d) will maintain a reserve pool of at least 100 selected unnamed WORKERS who are medically examined, whose passports have been issued and who are therefore ready to depart for Canada when requests are received from Canadian EMPLOYERS;
  - (e) will appoint one or more agents in Canada for the purpose of ensuring the smooth functioning of the Program for the mutual benefit of both the EMPLOYERS and WORKERS, and to perform the duties required of that agent under the attached Employment Agreement.
3. All WORKERS from Mexico engaged in employment in Canada pursuant to the Program will, to the extent provided for in the Employment Agreement, be entitled to the benefits
- (a) of a regime for the compensation to WORKERS for injuries received or disease contracted as a result of employment; and
  - (b) of insurance to cover non-professional medical expenses, hospital care and death benefits.
4. All travel arrangements for WORKERS selected for the purposes of the Program:
- (a) will provide for the most economical method of air transportation to and from Canada, and will be made by an agent of the Canadian EMPLOYERS who will notify the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission of such arrangements; and
  - (b) will be subject to the prior approval of both parties to this Memorandum of Understanding and will be made so as to cause the least inconvenience possible to the WORKERS.
5. The present Operational Guidelines may be reviewed and amended annually through consultation between officials designated by the parties to the Memorandum of Understanding.

Done in two copies in the English, French and Spanish languages, each version being equally authoritative.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Manitoba Farm Workers' Association Preamble and Proposed Constitution**

#### **Preamble**

We, the farm workers of the Portage District have laboured in the fields, sown and harvested the crops. We have assisted in providing food for people in our cities and in our province, but we have not had sufficient food for ourselves.

Industrial workers have organized, have joined together and have grown strong. We have been isolated, scattered and hindered from uniting our forces.

We are the inheritors of constant economic exploitation, social injustice and suffering. Our fathers and their fathers were victims of the same inheritance.

Despite our isolation, our sufferings, our social and economic oppression, we remain fulfilled with a desire to build our association as a bulwark against future exploitation.

Our rights to organize ourselves into a strong united voice are undeniably inscribed into the Canadian Bill of Rights.

We will take our rightful place in Canadian Society and in our Community, we will make our demands known and respected.

We believe in the dignity of tilling the soil and tending the crops.

We reject the notion that farm labour is but a step along the way to a job in the factory and life in the city.

We will build our association into a truly representative force for all farm workers of the Portage District.

We will take all the necessary steps to ensure our rights are protected by legislation.

We will struggle as long as it takes to reach our goals.

We pledge to treat all men as equals, to respect their rights and uphold their dignity.

We believe that all men should act towards each other in the spirit of Brotherhood.

We believe that Mother Earth is our source of dignity, respect, pride and honour.

#### **Proposed Constitution**

##### *Name*

The Association shall be known as the Manitoba Farm Workers Association and identified by the initials, M.F.W.A.

### *Headquarters*

The headquarters of the Association shall be in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

### *Jurisdiction*

The jurisdiction of the Association shall be all farm workers in the district known as the Portage C.F.L.P. District.

### *Structure*

The structure of the Association shall consist of the Convention, Board of Directors, and Special Committees of the Association.

### *Association Seal, Insignia and Flag*

The Association seal, insignia and flag shall bear the design of two hands shaking with Indian beadwork on the sleeve of the hand on the right side of the seal. The initials M.F.W.A. may also be included. Green shall serve as the official colour of the Association.

### *Objects of the Association*

#### *Between Workers*

- (a) to unite under its banner all individuals employed as Agricultural workers regardless of race, creed, sex, nationality, marital status or political belief;
- (b) to promote the development and maintenance of health, well being and on-the-job safety practices and such educational training programs amongst its members as would best affect a full knowledge of their rights, responsibilities, well being and interest;
- (c) to promote, foster, develop and advance the skills, efficiency and working knowledge necessary of such workers;

#### *Between Workers and Employers*

- (d) to protect the moral and legal rights of agricultural workers, to exert appropriate influence on any resisting employers by using non violent and legal activities;
- (e) to promote industrial peace and develop and more harmonious relationship between employees and employers;

#### *Between Association and Consumers*

- (f) to secure recognition by employers and the public of agricultural workers' right to organize for their mutual benefit;

### *Objects of the Association*

#### *Between Workers and Government*

- (g) to engage in legislative activity to establish, promote, protect and advance the physical, economic and social well being of the workers.

### *Commitment to Non-violence*

The above stated purposes and objects shall be accomplished only by and through totally non-violent means. Every member of this Association is pledged to reject the use of violence in any form for any Association activity.

### *Membership*

Any person regardless of race, sex, creed, nationality or political belief who is employed or actively seeking employment as a farm worker in the Portage C.F.L.P. District shall be eligible for membership providing that he/she is over 16 years of age. Membership fee shall be \$1.00 until December 1978.

### *The Board of Directors*

The table officers shall be elected at the Convention, and be composed of President, Secretary, Treasurer and 5 sitting members. The Past President shall be recognized as a sitting member for one year.

### *General Powers of the Board*

Administer the affairs and property of the Association, interpret the Constitution, change it if need be subject to ratification at annual Convention, administer the Association's money and carry out the objectives of the Association. The President shall be solely responsible for all negotiations and representation of the Association unless he/she delegates the responsibility.

### *Advisory Committee*

The Committee shall meet at least 3 times a year and be composed of all Chiefs and Band Administrators, appointed representatives of the M.I.B.-D.O.T.C., M.M.F., and the Past President of the M.E.W.A.

### *Convention*

The Convention shall be held once a year, plus four months, anywhere in the C.F.L.P. District of Portage. The date of the Founding Convention shall establish the future convention dates. Conduct during the Convention shall be according to Roberts' Rules of Order.

Source: Marcoux (1976)

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Job Classifications (1991)**

#### **7181-110: Farm Worker, General**

Performs general duties related to growing crops and raising livestock or poultry.

Operates tractor, plow, combine and other machinery to cultivate soil and to plant and harvest crops. Services machinery and makes minor repairs. Repairs farm buildings and fences, using hand and power tools and tractor-powered auger. Drives truck or tractor-drawn wagon to haul feed for livestock and to transport produce to market. Observes condition of poultry or livestock to detect disease or injury. Puts vaccine in drinking water of poultry and injects serum into cattle, using hypodermic needle, to immunize animals. Carries and distributes feed to animals and poultry. Operates mechanical devices to feed cattle, hogs or poultry, and to clean stables and pens. Cleans and disinfects poultry pens and houses to prevent disease. Cleans barnyard buildings using pitch fork and shovel.

#### **7183-122: Farm Worker, Vegetable**

Plants, cultivates and harvests vegetables.

Operates farm machinery to cultivate and fertilize soil. Mixes greenhouse soil with nutrients to prepare it for planting. Operates machinery and uses garden tools to plant seeds and seedlings in fields and greenhouses. Thins, weeds and hoes row crops. Mixes chemical solutions and operates tractor-drawn and manual sprayers to spray vegetables to control insects and to prevent plant diseases. Irrigates soil and maintains irrigation system. Erects supports for climbing vegetables and for protection of plants. Prunes and thins plants to promote growth. Operates farm machinery and uses hand tools to harvest vegetables. Operates shelling machine to shell vine crops. Trims, washes and sorts vegetables by hand or using mechanical equipment. Bunches, bags or packs vegetables for marketing. Services and makes minor repairs to machinery and equipment. Maintains and repairs farm buildings.

#### **7197-114: Farm Machinery Operator**

Operates tractor-drawn or self-propelled farm machinery to plant, cultivate and harvest crops.

Hitches implements to tractor, drives tractor, and operates controls on implements to plow, fertilize, cultivate, spray and harvest crops. Adjusts speed of cutters, blowers and conveyors, depth of digging blades, and height of cutting head of harvesting machine, using hand tools. Services machinery and makes minor repairs.

**7098-112: Farm labourer, General**

Assists in planting and harvesting crops, and in care of livestock, fur-bearing animals and poultry.

Plants seeds in fields or greenhouses and transplants seedlings, by hand or using mechanical aids. Assists in spraying and irrigation operations. Weeds, thins and hoes row crops, and assists in harvesting field and row crops. Picks fruit and nuts from trees, pulls or cuts grapes from vines, and picks berries from plants or bushes. Debeaks chicks and trims their wings. Assists in shearing and docking sheep, branding and castrating livestock, grooming horses and herding livestock. Feeds and waters livestock, fur-bearing animals and poultry. Cleans stables, pens and enclosures, by hand or using mechanical equipment. Loads and unloads supplies, produce and animals from truck. Assists in erecting, maintaining and repairing buildings and fences.

Source: Agricultural Employment Services (Portage la Prairie, Manitoba)

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Recommended Hourly Wage Rates (1991)**

	Average	Top End	Low End
7181-110 \$5.94	Farm Worker, General	\$9.00	\$4.70
7183-122 n/a	Farm Worker, Vegetable	n/a	n/a
7197-114 \$6.12	Farm Machinery Operator	\$8.50	\$5.00
7198-112 \$5.55	Farm Labourer, General	\$6.00	\$4.70

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## — INDEX —

- Abell, Helen C., 4  
Aboriginal farm workers, 49-51, 53-  
    55, 70-71  
    *See also* Metis farm workers  
Aboriginal peoples, 8-10, 35, 39, 42,  
    49, 51  
Absolute general law of capitalist  
    accumulation, 10  
Absolute surplus value, x, 5  
Adachi, Ken, 40  
Agrarian populism, 16  
Agribusiness, vii, 65, 71  
Agricultural Employment Services  
    (AES), x, 47, 52-53, 58, 68  
Agricultural institutes, 16  
Agricultural Manpower Officer, x  
Agricultural Profile of Canada, 7  
Agricultural Profile of Manitoba, 17-  
    20  
Agricultural trade, 65  
Agricultural workers, 7, 59  
Agriculture  
    *See* Canadian agriculture  
Agriculture Canada, 63-64  
*Agriculture in the Classroom*, 14  
Agriculture Manitoba, 7, 17-18, 20  
Alarcon, Rafael, 66  
Alberta (province), 13, 31, 40, 42, 56,  
    64  
Alvarez, Alejandro, 67  
Anthropology, x, 1, 61  
*Anwohner* (those without property)  
    43-44, 46  
Arsenault, Kevin J., 65  
Asparagus, 23  
Assiniboine River, 13, 35  
Atlantic Canada, 13, 15  
Bach, Robert L., 10  
Barkin, David, 67  
Barley, 13-14  
Basran, G.S., 11, 19  
Beans, 21, 31  
Beef, 8, 34  
    *See also* Cattle  
Beets, 23, 31, 42  
Bell, Daniel, 3  
Bennett, T.A., 29  
Berry-farming co-operatives, 41  
Best Pack of Farm King, 31  
Binkley, Alex, 65  
Bird, Bradley C., 8  
Bird's Hill, 24  
Bogacz, Rick, 46, 60  
Bohuslawsky, Maria, 43, 61  
Bolaria, B. Singh, 2, 10  
Boom-and-bust cycle, vii, 31, 70  
Bourgeoisie, 1, 2, 17  
*Braceros* (farm workers), 58-60  
Brandon Experimental Farm, 14  
Braverman, Harry, 9  
*Briarpatch*, 5  
British Columbia (province), 13, 15-  
    16, 29-30, 40-41  
British Columbia Coast Vegetable  
    Marketing Board, 28-29  
British Columbia Security  
    Commission (BCSC), 40-41  
Broccoli, 23, 28, 63  
Brownstone, Meyer, 27  
Brussel sprouts, 23, 63  
Buckley, Helen, 8  
Buckwheat, 21  
Buffalo, 34  
Bulgarians, 39  
Burawoy, Michael, 48

- Business Week*, 64  
 Bustamante, Jorge A., 12
- Cabbage, 22-23, 28, 63  
 California, USA, 49, 56  
 Cameron, Maxwell, 67  
 Campbell Soup Company, 31-32, 63, 65, 71
- Canada  
 aboriginal peoples in, 8-9  
 agricultural products of, 13, 62  
 and Commonwealth Caribbean & Mexican liaison, 60  
 and CUSTA, 57-68  
 food processors in, 31  
 foreign seasonal agricultural workers programs, 48, 60  
 immigration policy of, 11-12, 39-40  
 Mexican Mennonites in, 43-44  
 and NAFTA, 57-68
- Canada Access to Information Act, x  
 Canada-Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, ix-x, 10, 46, 64
- Canada Employment Centre (CEC), 47, 55, 68  
*See also* Canada Employment and Immigration Centre  
*See also* Canada Manpower  
*See also* Employment and Immigration Canada
- Canada Employment and Immigration Centre (CEIC), 47
- Employer Specialist at, ix-x, 56  
*See also* Canada Employment Centre  
*See also* Canada Manpower  
*See also* Employment and Immigration Canada
- Canada Manpower, 46-47, 50  
*See also* Canada Employment Centre  
*See also* Canada Employment and Immigration Centre  
*See also* Employment and Immigration Canada
- Canada-Mexico labour program (Manitoba), ix
- Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, viii-xi, 10, 46-58, 60-61, 64, 66-69, 71
- Canada Packers, 31  
 Canada Sessional Papers, x  
 Canada-United States Trade Agreement (CUSTA), vii-viii, 57, 62-63, 65
- Canadian agriculture, vii-viii, 6, 62-63, 65  
 crisis in, vii, 69  
 economies of scale in, 58  
 history of, 13-17  
 mechanization of, vii-viii, 5, 9, 19, 21-23, 34, 42, 56  
 modernization of, 34  
 regional specialization in, vii, 13  
 social relations in, 1-12  
 sphere of exchange in, 13  
 sphere of marketing in, 16, 24, 26  
 sphere of production in, 26  
*See also* Canadian horticulture
- Canadian Armed Forces, 43  
 Canadian Canners, 31  
 Canadian Council of Agriculture, 16  
 Canadian farmers, vii-viii, 5, 8  
 Canadian horticulture, 13, 15, 16, 23, 57  
 and NAFTA, 65-66, 72  
*See also* Canadian agriculture
- Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC), 66  
 as lobbying group, 26  
 Canadian International Trade Tribunal (CITT), 64-65, 67  
 Canadian Wheat Board, 66  
 Canola, 13-14  
 Cantaloupe, 66  
 Capital, 4, 10-11, 19  
 Capital-intensive production, 51  
 Capitalism, x, 2, 5, 10, 12  
 agriculture and, 5  
 class in, 11, 17  
 economy of, vii, x, 17, 19  
 exploitation in, 9  
 in society, 1, 3, 11  
 as system, 3-4
- Capital-labour relationship, 8, 35  
 Capital-relation, 4  
 Cappon, Paul, 12  
 Cardoso, Lawrence A., 58, 59

- Carnation Company, 31-32, 64  
 Carrots, 22-23, 28, 63-64  
 Cartstens, Peter, 8  
 Carter, Sarah, 35, 42  
 Castaneda, Jorge, 66  
 Castles, S., 10, 12  
 Cattle, 5, 13-14, 37, 62  
*See also Beef*  
 Cauliflower, 16, 21, 23, 63-64  
 CEC  
*See Canada Employment Centre*  
 Cecil, R.G., 10  
 CEIC  
*See Canada Employment and Immigration Centre*  
 Celery, 23, 28, 53, 63  
 Census Agricultural Regions (Manitoba), 6  
 Census of Canada, 7, 17, 18, 19, 20  
 Census Overview of Canadian Agriculture, 19  
 Central Farmers' market, 16  
*Central Manitoba Farmer, The*, x  
 Cereals, 13, 23, 36  
 Chapin, P., 6, 36  
 Cherwinski, W.J.C., 35  
 Chicken, 14  
 Children's Aid Society, 49  
 Chiquita Brands Limited, 27  
 Class consciousness, 11, 71  
 Class fractions, 5, 8, 17  
     along cultural traits, 4  
     along economic lines, viii, 2, 4, 70  
     along ethnic lines, viii,  
     among farm workers, 35  
     along ideological lines, viii, 2, 4, 5, 70  
     along political lines, viii, 2, 4-5, 70  
     along racial lines, viii, 10, 35, 42  
     competition among, vii  
 Class relations, 1-2, 4, 8  
 Class structure, viii, 4, 44  
 Clement, Wallace, 4, 32  
 Coalson, George O., 60  
 Cockcroft, James D., 61  
 Colonial reserve labour, 9  
 Commonwealth Caribbean, 46  
 Compulsory marketing, 30, 70  
 Conservatives (political party), 30  
 Consumption (of goods), 12  
 Conway, John, 4, 5, 16, 17  
 Co-operatives, 16, 19, 24-25, 27-28  
 Corn, 13, 28, 31, 35  
 Cost-price squeeze, vii, 5, 13, 16, 70  
 Cost of production, 21  
 Croatians, 39  
 Crop diversification, 16  
 Cucumbers, 16, 21, 23, 63  
 Culture of poverty, 4, 8, 12  
 CUSTA  
*See Canada-United States Trade Agreement*  
 Czechoslovakians, 39  
 Dairy production, 5, 13, 14  
 Dakota Tipi, 35, 37  
 Danysk, Cecilia, 35  
 Day-Haul Program, 53  
 Day-Haul Transportation Program, 68  
 Del Monte Banana Company, 27  
 Department of Agriculture (Manitoba), 25  
 Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, x, 9, 36, 42, 54  
 Department of Labour  
     Japanese Division, 41  
 Dependency perspective, 10  
 Dependency theorists, 1-4, 8-11  
 Depression era, 20  
 Dinerman, Ina R., 61  
 Dion, Louis, 41, 42  
 Distribution (of goods), 12  
 Domestic labour, x, 49, 53  
     mobilization of, viii, 1  
     and racism, 12  
     shortages, 58-59  
 Dominion City, 36  
 Drummond, W.M., 28  
 Dumping  
     of food surplus, 63, 65  
 Dunning, R.W., 8, 9  
 Durand, Jorge, 61  
 Dyson, David J. (pickle company), 16, 31  
 Easter, Wayne, 65

- Ebanks, G.E., 10  
Echeverria, Luis  
Mexican President, 60  
Economic colonialism, 26  
Economic process, x  
Economic recession, 2, 11  
Eggs, 13-14, 34  
*Ejidos* (land tenure), 67  
Elias, Peter Douglas, 37  
Emerson, 21, 36  
Employment and Immigration  
Canada (EIC), 15, 23, 64  
*See also* Canada Employment and  
Immigration Centre  
*See also* Canada Employment  
Centre  
*See also* Canada Manpower  
Employment Standards Act  
(Manitoba), 49, 53  
Ethnic group, 2-4, 12  
Ethnic relations, 1, 4, 11  
Ethnicity, 2, 54, 69  
Ethno-national consciousness, 3  
Euro-Canadians, 8  
European Economic Community, 20  
Exchange (of goods), 12  
Experimental farms, 39  
  
Factors of production, 10  
Fair trade, 57, 72  
Farm gate prices, 26-27  
Farm labour, 8, 42, 49  
and Aboriginal Canadians, 35  
Caribbeans as, 11  
as culture of resistance, 35  
Japanese as, 35  
Mexican Mennonites as, 35, 43-46  
Mexican migrants as, 35  
sources of, 35-56  
Farm labour camps, ix  
Farmers, 12, 16  
and class fractions, 4  
class position of, 1, 4-8, 26  
as high-risk entrepreneurs, vii  
as petty bourgeois, 5  
Farmers' markets, 16  
Fertilizers, 16, 31  
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, 54  
Friesen, Ron, 63, 64, 66  
  
Fish, 16  
Fishing co-operatives, 41  
Flax, 14  
Flaxseed, 21  
Floating surplus population, 8-10,  
39, 45, 70  
Food  
marketing of, 27  
processing industry for, 13, 62,  
64-65  
processors of, 8, 31-34, 51, 64, 70  
shortages in, vii, 39  
surpluses in, vii, 63, 65  
Foreign farm workers, 1, 10-11, 47-48,  
53, 55-56  
Foreign Seasonal Agricultural  
Workers Program, 47, 69  
Forsyth, Paul, 46, 60  
Fowke, Vernon C., 16  
Francis, Jack, 53  
Frank, Andre Gunder, 2, 3  
Frechette, Jean-Denis, 62, 63  
Free-enterprise stance, 8  
Free markets, x, 10, 16, 30, 57  
Free trade, 16, 57, 72  
*See also* Canada-United States  
Trade Agreement  
*See also* North American Free  
Trade Agreement  
Frideres, James S., 8, 9  
Friedland, William H., ix  
Fruits, 5, 13-15, 42  
Fur-trade era, 9  
  
Galarza, Ernesto, 56, 58  
Gardeners Sales Limited, 25-26, 30  
Gardenland Canners, 31  
Garlic, 66  
Geary, Andrea, 23  
General Agreement on Tariffs and  
Trade (GATT), 62, 64  
Germans, 39  
Ghorayshi, Parvin, 4, 5, 20  
Gibson, Katherine, 10  
Glazer, N., 3  
Grading and packing systems, 23-24  
Graham, Julie, 10  
Grain, 5, 8, 13, 40, 37  
Granatstein, J.L., 40

- Green peppers, 23  
 Greenhouse tomatoes, 15  
 Greenhouses, 23  
 Grinspan, Ricardo, 67  
 Growing Manitoba, 14
- Hainstock, Bob, 51  
 Haney, Jane B., 47  
 Harper, Laurie, 44, 45  
 Haskett (city), 21  
 Hawkins, Freda, 12  
 Hay, D.A., 11, 18  
 Health and safety issues, 26  
 Hedley, Max J., 7  
 Heinrichs, Elmer, 46  
 Hill, Carla  
     American trade representative, 66  
 Hill, Larry, 55  
 Hiscocks, G.A., 27, 28, 29  
 Hog farms, 14, 46, 62  
 Honey, 14  
 Horizontal integration, 31  
 Horticulture  
     *Ser* Canadian agriculture  
     *Ser* Canadian horticulture  
 Howard, James H., 37  
 Hughes, David R., 2  
 Human Resource Forecast form, 47  
 Hunter, Nick, 23, 49  
 Hutterite colonies, 19
- Iino, Masako, 40  
 Immigrant labour, 11-13  
 Immigration, 11-12, 16, 48  
 Indian Affairs, 37  
     Director of, 42  
 Indian agriculture, 37  
 Indian Gardens, 35  
 Indian reserve system, 9, 36  
 Indigenous economies, 9  
 Insect infestation, 23  
 Interethnic alliances, 11  
 Irrigation, 22-23, 26
- Jackson, Indian Agent, 39  
 Japanese, 40-42, 56, 70  
 Johnson, Leo, 5
- Kallen, Evelyn, 2  
 Kapuskasing, Ontario, 39  
 Kay, V.J., 39  
 Kearney, Michael, 61  
 Kent, Linda L., x  
 Kildonan Canning Company, 31  
 Kirstein, Peter N., 59  
 Kiser, George C., 58, 59  
 Kiser, Martha Woody, 58, 59  
 Knight, Rolf, 8, 9, 10  
 Kosack, G., 10, 12  
 Kusch, Larry, 66
- Labour, viii, 12, 27  
     shortages in, viii-x, 11, 39, 42, 46-48, 55-56, 70-71  
     surplus of, 8-10, 46
- Labour theory of value, 5, 12  
 Lake Manitoba, 37  
 Lake Winnipegosis, 38  
 La Violette, Forrest E., 40  
 Letellier, 36  
 Lettuce, 22-23, 28, 53  
 Lewis, Oscar, 4, 34  
 Li, Peter S., 2, 10  
 Liberals (political party), 30  
 Livestock, 15-16  
 Lobbying, vii, 11, 26  
 Local Employment Assistance Program (LEAP), 50  
 Logan, Indian Agent, 39  
 Long Plain, 35-36, 38  
 Long Plain Sioux, 35, 38  
 Loxley, John, 8, 9, 10  
 Lumber, 16
- Machinery, 8, 21, 31-32  
 Majka, Linda C., 59, 60  
 Majka, Theo J., 59, 60  
 Manitoba (province)  
     aboriginal peoples in, 62  
     and CUSTA, 64  
     farms in, 5, 17-21  
     farm labour in, 35-56  
     and foreign workers, 60-61  
     government of, 48-49  
     Indian reserves in, 9  
     market gardening in, vii, 13-34  
     racism in, 12

- See also* Market Gardening,  
Manitoba Commercial  
Manitoba Agricultural College, 25  
Manitoba Agricultural Manpower, 54  
Manitoba Agricultural Yearbook, 6,  
17, 21  
Manitoba agriculture, viii, 1, 8, 13,  
35, 39, 69  
*See also* Market gardening,  
Manitoba commercial  
Manitoba Agriculture  
Chief of Horticultural Section  
(Carman), x  
Manitoba Agriculture and Agri-Food  
Canada, 14  
Manitoba Associated Growers, 24  
*Manitoba Co-operator, The*, x, 22, 30,  
64, 65  
Manitoba Department of Agriculture,  
15, 21-23, 69  
Deputy Minister of, 25  
Minister of, 30  
Manitoba Department of Agriculture  
and Immigration, 9, 46, 48  
Manitoba Farm Workers Association  
(MFWA), ix, xi, 49-56, 71-72  
Manitoba Fruit and Vegetable  
Wholesalers Association, 26-27  
Manitoba Grain Growers'  
Association, 16, 70  
Manitoba Japanese Joint Council  
(MJJC), 41  
Manitoba Legislature, 50  
Manitoba Marketing Board, 30  
Manitoba Potato Marketing  
Commission, 30  
Manitoba Root Crop Producers  
Marketing Board, 31  
Manitoba Sugar Beet Company, 41  
Manitoba Sugar Beet Growers  
Association, 40-41  
Manitoba Sugar Company, 40  
Manitoba Truck Farmers Co-opera-  
tive, 24  
Manitoba, University of, 32  
Manitoba Vegetable Marketing  
Commission, 30  
Manitoba Vegetable and Potato  
Growers Co-operative, 24, 30  
Manitoba Vegetable Processors  
Association, 30  
Manitoba Vegetable Producers  
Marketing Board, xi, 19, 27-31,  
28-31, 34  
Manitowahap Agency, 38  
*Maquiladora* (assembly plant), 67  
Marcoux, Roland, 51, 52  
Maritimes, 16  
Market gardeners, 16, 24-26  
Market gardening  
Manitoba commercial, ix, 15, 19,  
31  
bilateral relations in, 57-68,  
71  
and class, viii, 69  
and contracts with food  
processors, 31-34  
and co-operative marketing,  
70  
under CUSTA, 62-64, 66, 69,  
71-72  
and domestic labourers, 58,  
72  
and domestic markets, 62-63  
and ethnic relations, viii  
expansion of, vii-viii  
family farms, 19  
future of, vii, viii, 62-69  
growth in, 69  
history of, x, 13-17, 52  
as labour-intensive, vii, 14, 22,  
69  
labour sources of, viii, 4-5, 21  
labour conditions in, 47  
labour shortages in, 46  
and liberalized agricultural  
trade, 62-63  
machinery in, 46  
and marketing boards, 7, 27  
marketing strategies of, 24-31  
and Mexican workers, 12, 57-  
61  
under NAFTA, 64-69, 71  
partnerships in, 19  
post-war developments in, 17-  
23  
production scale of, ix  
and race, viii  
and social relations, 69  
socioeconomic position of,

- viii  
 and tariffs, 63  
 trilateral relations in, 57-68  
*See also* Canadian agriculture  
*See also* Farm labour  
 Marketing boards, ix, 7, 27-31  
 compulsory participation in, 28, 62-63  
 and export trade, 29, 70-71  
 and free markets, 30  
 objectives of, 28  
 Marketing commission, 30  
 Marketing co-operatives, 24, 27-28  
 Marlatt  
     Indian Agencies Inspector, 38  
 Martens, Janet, 31, 32  
 Marx, Karl, 4-5, 8, 10, 12, 34  
 Marxist theorists, 1, 4, 8, 10-11  
 Massey, Douglas S., 61  
 McCain Foods, 31, 32, 64-66  
 McCook, Sheila, 50, 51  
 McGaughey, William, 66, 67  
 McWilliams, Carey, 58  
 Meakin, Darlene, 52  
 Medium petty bourgeoisie, 57, 71  
 Mendoza, Gabriela, 67  
 Mennonite Central Committee (Manitoba), 45  
 Mennonites, 43  
*See also* Mexican Mennonites  
 Metis farm workers, 13, 49  
 Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, 67  
 Mexican Agricultural Credit Bank, 59  
 Mexican labour  
     abuses of, 58, 60  
     as foreign workers, ix, xi, 12, 35, 45-46, 48-49, 51, 53, 55-56, 70-71  
     immigration policy on, 44, 54  
     mobility of, ix, 66  
     and out-migration, 57, 72  
*See also* Mexico  
 Mexican Mennonites, 35, 44-46, 70-71  
 Mexico, 43, 46-48, 61-62  
     and agrarian reforms, 61  
     and agribusiness, 62  
     and class composition of migrants, 61  
     federal labour law, 60  
     labour opportunities in, 67  
     marketing board in, 62  
     and mass emigration, 58, 67  
     and migration strategies, 61, 67  
     and "model contract," 58-59  
 Migrant labourers, 10  
 Miles, Robert, 2, 3, 4, 10, 12  
 Milk production, 34  
 Miller, Robert L., 8, 9, 10  
 Minister of Labour, 47  
 Mink-ranching, 14  
 Minneapolis, Minnesota, 64  
 Minnesota Uprising of 1863-64, 37  
 Mitchell, Don, vii  
 Morden, Manitoba, 31, 43  
 Morden Fine Foods, 31  
 Morin, Alexander, 54  
 Morton, W.L., 13-14, 16, 34  
 Moynihan, D.P., 3  
 Munoz, Cecilia, 67  
 Multiculturalism, 10  
 Multinational corporations, 64  
 Mushrooms, 15  
 Muskmelons, 22  
 Nappan, Nova Scotia, 39  
 National Archives of Canada, x, 42  
 National Farmers Union (NFU), x, 6, 65  
 National Program for Modernization of the Countryside (1990-1994), 62  
 Necessary labour time, 5  
 Nelkin, Dorothy, ix  
 New Brunswick (province), 31-32  
 New Democratic Party (NDP), 30, 49-51, 53-54, 56  
 Non-Marxist theorists, 2-4, 8, 10-11  
 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), vii, viii, 57, 62, 64-68  
 Northend Farmers Market, 24  
 Nova Scotia (province), 64  
 Nuñez, Theron A., x  
 Oats, 13  
 Ogeltree, Indian agent, 36-38

- Oils, 16
- Ojibwa, 35, 37
- Okanagan Valley fruit growers, 27
- Onions, 16, 22-23, 28, 48, 53, 63
- Ontario (province)
- aboriginal farm workers in, 42
  - Caribbean workers in, 10-11, 60, 64
  - commercial market gardeners in, 11
  - farm lobby in, 47
  - food processors in, 65
  - horticulture in, 15
  - marketing boards in, 29-30
  - Mexican workers in, 12, 46, 60, 64
  - migrant labour in, 11
  - race relations in, 12
- Ontario Asparagus Growers Marketing Board, 28-29
- Organic farming, 26
- Panitch, Leo, 11
- Parai, Louise, 12
- Parsnips, 28
- Pauperism, 8-9
- Paupers, 9-10
- Peas, 21, 31
- Peasant farming policy, 38
- Peddling activities, 16
- Pembina Pocket, 21-22, 69
- Pembina Valley Development Corporation, 46
- Pest management programs, 23
- Pesticides, 64-66
- Peters, P.J., 14, 24, 25, 26, 28
- Petty bourgeoisie, 4-5, 12, 16-17, 69, 71
- class fractions of, 70-71
- Petty commodity production, 4, 9, 39
- Phillips, Paul, 16
- Phizacklea, Annie, 2, 10, 12
- Plum Coulee, 21
- Ponce de León, Ernesto Zedillo Mexican President, 67
- Populists, 6, 17
- See also Farmers*
- Pork, 8, 13
- Portage la Prairie, x-xi, 23, 32, 37, 49, 51, 63, 65-66, 68
- Portage la Prairie Agency, 37-38
- Portage la Prairie Sioux, 35, 37, 39
- Potatoes, x, 13-15, 20-23, 25, 28, 35
- growers, 28, 56
  - processors, 31
  - producers, xi, 19, 44-45, 48, 50
  - production of, 15, 22, 26
- Poultry, 5, 34
- Prairie farmers, 24, 35
- Prairie grass, 34
- Prairies, 9, 13, 15, 16, 25
- Prince Edward Island (province), 31, 65
- Processing plants, 26, 31, 57, 62, 65
- Processors, 26-27, 29-30
- contracts with, 32-34
- Production (of goods), vii, 8, 10, 12
- Production relations, 1-2, 4, 10
- Proletariat, 1-3, 17
- Protective tariffs, 16
- See also Tariffs*
- Provincial Archives of Manitoba, x
- Oral History Collection in, 40
- Pugh, Terry, 65
- Pulses, 14
- Quebec (province), 15, 64
- Quota system, 24
- Race, 1-4, 10-12, 69
- Racialism, 10
- Racialization, 12
- See also Class fractions*
- Racialized class fractions, 69-71
- Racism, 2, 4, 10-12, 50-51, 70-71
- Rapeseed, 21
- Raspberries, 21
- Red River, 13, 40
- Red River Colony, 13
- Redekop, Calvin Wall, 43, 44
- Registered seed, 25
- Relations of distribution, 2
- Relations of exchange, 2
- Relative surplus population, 8
- Relative surplus value, 5
- Research techniques, x, xi
- Reserve agriculture, 35, 42
- Reserve army of labour, 8-9

- Retail trade, 24, 26-27  
 Robson, Barbara, 63  
 Root crops, x, 28, 36  
 Roseau Reserve, 36, 38-39  
 Roseau River, 35  
 Rosen, Fred, 67  
 Rosenfeld, 21  
 Rosner, Cecil, 50, 52  
 Rostow, W.W., 34  
 Roy, Patricia E., 40  
 Russia, 43  
 Rutabagas, 23, 28, 63
- Salinas,**  
*Mexican President*, 66-67  
 Sandy Bay reserve, 35, 37, 38  
 Saskatchewan (province), 13, 38  
 Sassen-Koob, S., viii  
 Satzwich, Vic., ix, x, 11, 12  
 Sawatzky, Harry Leonard, 43, 44, 45  
 Schmink, M., 10  
 Scholtens, William H., 60  
 Schraml, Lisa A., 10  
 Scott National Limited, 27  
 Seager, Allen, 56  
 Seasonal workers, 23, 39, 41, 49  
 Seneca (snake) root, 36, 37, 42  
 Shrybman, Steven, 64  
 Skogstad, Grace, 5  
 Smith, Ian, 23  
 Spirit Lake, Quebec, 39  
 Social assistance, 56  
*See also Welfare*  
 Social relations, 1, 3  
 Social status, 54  
 Soybeans, 21  
 Squash, 23  
 Stagnant surplus population, 9, 10  
 Statistics Canada, x, 7, 17-20, 34  
 Stirling, Bob, 4, 5, 16, 17  
 Stone, Garth E., 23  
 Stooking, 42  
 Strawberries, 21  
 Stuart, James, 61  
 Suderman, Brenda, 45  
 Sugar beets, 14, 21, 40  
 farms, 40, 42, 44-46, 49  
 growers, 48, 50, 56
- industry, 13, 21, 41, 70  
 Sunflowers, 14, 21  
 Sunkist Growers, 27  
 Surplus labour, 57  
 Surplus labour time, 5  
 Surplus value, x, 5, 34  
 Swan Lake, 35, 38  
 Sweet corn, 21, 63  
 Swinford, Indian Agent, 37-38  
 Systematic field culture, 13
- Takamura, Hiroko, 40  
 Takata, Toyo, 40, 41  
 Tariff reduction, 63  
 Tariffs, 62-63, 65-66  
*See also Protective tariff*  
 Tax incentives, 18  
 Teeple, Gary, x  
 Theory of surplus value, 5  
 Thompson, John Herd, 56  
 Thompson, Richard H., 11  
 Thornhill, 21  
 Thunder Bay, 6, 36  
 Tomatoes, 21, 23, 28, 32, 53, 63  
 Toronto, Ontario, 63  
 Trade agreements, 69, 71  
 Trade policies, vii, 57  
 Truck Farmers Co-operative, 24  
**Truck Farming**  
*See Market gardening*  
 Trucking, 14  
 Turkey, 14  
 Turner, Randy, 45  
 Turnips, 13, 28  
 Tyler, Earl J., 4
- Ukrainians, 39  
*Union Farmer, The*, x, 65  
 Unions, ix, 45, 50, 54, 56  
 United States, 20, 24, 31, 40, 46, 62  
 United States Employment Service, 58  
 United States Federal Department of Agriculture, 71  
 United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), 64, 66  
 United States-Mexico Bracero Program, viii, 57-62, 68-69, 71

- 1942 Agreement, 59-60  
United Vegetable Producers of Manitoba (UVPMP), 30, 53
- Vacation for Victory campaign, 40  
Vegetable Growers Association of Manitoba (VGAM), 23, 25-27, 30-31, 53, 63, 70
- Vegetable Marketing Commission, 30, 34
- Vegetables  
growers of, 5, 23, 28, 50, 69  
in market gardens, ix-x, 13-15, 19-21, 23  
marketing strategy for, 24  
processors of, 30-31  
production of, 25-26, 49
- Verner, Coolie, 4
- Vertical integration, 31, 64
- Vested interest groups, 7  
*See also Farmers*
- Waisenamt* (trust organization), 43
- Wall, Ellen, 10
- Wallerstein, Immanuel, 2, 3, 11
- Warnock, John W., 31, 32, 62, 63
- Watermelons, 66
- Welfare, x, 9-10, 46, 49  
*See also Social assistance*
- West Indian workers, 11-12
- Western Vinegar, 31
- Wheat, 13-16, 21, 34, 62, 69
- Wheat subsidy war, 20
- White, Ian R., 23
- Wholesale trade, 24, 26, 29, 53
- Wiest, Raymond E., 61
- Wilson, Barry K., 8, 16
- Winkler, Manitoba, 31, 48
- Winnipeg, Manitoba, x-xi, 16, 21, 23-24, 40, 50, 54, 68  
*Winnipeg Free Press*, 55
- Winnipeg Gardeners Co-operative Limited, 27-28  
Peak of Market logo of, 24-25
- Winnipeg Tribune, x, 21, 40, 42, 44, 46-48, 50-51, 55, 61
- Wirts (those with property), 43-44
- Wolpe, Harold, 8
- Wood, Charles H., 10
- Worker migration, 61-62  
Working Class, 16  
*See Proletariat*
- World War I, 39, 42, 58
- World War II, 16, 39, 42-44, 58, 70-71
- Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), 62
- Zielinski, Susan, 66

# **Manitoba Commercial Market Gardening, 1945-1997**

## **Class, Race and Ethnic Relations**

*by Avis Mysyk*

This case study examines the historical development of Manitoba farming, in general, and of the labour-intensive sector of commercial market gardening, in particular, and the various ethnic groups that have been mobilized by the state to form the province's farm labour force. Of particular importance is the rise of the Manitoba Farm Workers Association, the membership of which was mainly Aboriginal Canadian, in response to the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. The work also speculates on the future of the program and on that of Manitoba commercial market gardening as a whole in light of recent free trade agreements that Canada has entered into with the United States and Mexico.

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